The Thai Military in Politics:

An Analytical Study

by

Kamol Somvichian

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of London

School of Oriental and African Studies

August, 1969

To my wife, Marielena

and my daughter, Marisa

ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the political change of mid-twentieth century Thailand and the role of the armed forces in that change. The thesis is divided into four sections: the traditional polity, the emergence of the military in politics in the contemporary era, the performance and style of the military-dominated government, and the political resources and characteristics of the officers. The approach is historical and descriptive.

The first part (Chapter One: Traditional Background) attempts to show the relationship between the military and the civil bureaucracy in the history of Thailand (Siam). It emphasises the vague and largely artificial distinction between the civil and military authority. It examines the "modernisation" of the Thai army since its beginning. It tries to show that this modernisation did not represent a major transformation in the role of the military but that this modernisation was merely a veneer.

The second part (Chapter Two: The Military in the Constitutional Era) is a detailed study of the revolution of June, 1932, which brought about the collapse of direct monarchical rule in Thailand. It attempts to demonstrate how a coup d'etat is prepared and launched. It then evaluates the problems facing the soldiers and their collaborators after the successful take-over of the government.

The third part (Chapter Three: The Military in World War II; Chapter Four: The Military in Postwar Politics) is intended to provide

an account of the political crisis before and after the Japanese invasion of Thailand in December, 1941, a crisis resulting in the downfall of the Phibun Songkhram government in August, 1944. There follows an account of the events surrounding the return of Field Marshal Phibun in November, 1947, and the subsequent coups and couter-coups. The performance and problems of the Thai government from 1947 to 1957 are analysed, and the internal power struggle among different cliques and factions which led to the collapse of the Phibun Songkhram regime in September, 1957 is described.

The last part (Chapter Five: The Army: Organisation, Education, and Resources; Chapter Six: Characteristics of the Thai Military Government) is an analytical study of the armed forces' power base, their political style, and outlook. We discuss the organisational structure, the administration, education, and financial resources of the military, and attempt to understand the officers' self-image. We conclude with the accomplishments and problems of the Thai government from 1958 until the present, and recent trends in Thai politics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been written without the generous support of the Rockefeller Foundation. I am deeply indebted to the Foundation. Many of its staff, particularly Dr. Kenneth Thompson, Dr. William Bradley, Mr. Robert Fischelis, Mr. Jesse Perry, Jr., Miss Nancy Clucas, and Miss Carol Bogardus, are gratefully acknowledged for their kind assistance throughout my studies at Columbia and London Universities.

Many persons have been of great help to me in the preparation of this thesis. I wish to thank especially Mr. Sawarach Sajamak of Thammasat University; Lieutenant Banjong Kantawirut and Captain Prasai Songsurawet of the Ministry of Defence, Thailand; Captain Maitri Buranasiri of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation; Mr. Suraksa Sivaraksa of the Social Science Association of Thailand Press; Mr. Prathan Rangsimaporn and Mr. Manit Warin of the Information Service of Thailand, London; and Mr. Phan Wannamethi and Mr. Sawad Nana of the Royal Thai Embassy, London, for their assistance in the gathering of the materials. Lady La-iad Phibunsongkhram kindly let me use some of her private manuscripts. Mr. Stuart Simmonds of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, has been helpful in personal matters and in obtaining the necessary books. The staff of the Royal Institute of International Affairs Press Library, where I did part of my research, has been of kind assistance. I wish to express my gratitude to them.

I also wish to thank Mr. Henry Ginsburg, Mr. Allan Lodge of SOAS Library, and Mr. Roger Kershaw of the University of Hull, who read parts of the first draft. The assistance of Mrs. Judith East who typed this final draft is gratefully acknowledged.

Three persons have been of the greatest assistance to me: Professor Hugh Tinker, my advisor, has given so generously of his time, advice, encouragement, and wisdom; Mr. Thomas Gochberg, my former roommate and long-time friend, has read the thesis several times and has provided valuable suggestions and grammatical correction; and Marielena, my wife, has tirelessly helped me in every way including the typing of the first and second drafts of the thesis. My gratitude to them cannot be adequately expressed.

TRANSLITERATION OF THAI

Thai names, words, and publication titles are transcribed according to a phonetic system which is based on the "General System of Phonetic Transcription of Thai Characters into Roman" as outlined in the Journal of Thailand Research Society of March, 1941. However, some modifications have been made in order to simplify the system to suit the non-phonemic and non-Thai readers. In brief, the transliteration is as follows:

1. The voiced unaspirated stops are written b and d; the voiceless unaspirated stops are written p, t, j, and k.
2. The voiceless aspirated stops are written ph, th, ch, and kh.
3. The voiceless spirants are written f, s, and h.
4. The voiced nasals are written m, n, and ng.
5. The nine vowels are written thus:

   i, e, ae (front unrounded),
   ue, oe, a (central unrounded),
   u, o, or (back unrounded).

6. The voiced semivowels are written y and w in the initial position. In the final position they are respectively written j and o when following a or ae as w when following i.
7. The glottal stop is not transcribed.
8. The long and short vowels together with the five tone-marks are omitted.

9. Certain names (such as Vajiravudh, Chulalongkorn, and Sri Intharathit) are written in the customary style.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

TRADITIONAL BACKGROUND

To understand contemporary Thai politics it is necessary to bear in mind the development of the armed forces in Thai history. The military has long been a focal point in the working of Thai political and social systems. Its role in Thai society is unique and has exhibited a marked continuity. The distinctive nature of the Thai military is marked by its symbiotic relationship with the civilian. In old Siam, as much as in present day Thailand, the distinction between the civil and the military was vague and, to a certain extent, unreal.

I. Civil-Military Relations

The Thai military as an organisational entity preceded the civil bureaucracy. When the Thais migrated southward from China there were frequent wars with their neighbours. In consequence, their political and administrative organisations were determined largely by military requirements.[1] These bureaucratic antecedents were in turn incorporated into their social system. As Prince Damrong noted:

---

1. H.G. Quaritch Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration, Bernard Quaritch Ltd., London, 1934, p. 44.

> In ancient time the family, the most basic foundation of society, was utilised to form the organisation base of the military. This practice was in line with old Siamese traditions which considered all able-bodied men a soldier. It was subsequently made into law that children of the same family belong to similar military departments as that of the father's...Many such families composed a korng (company), many korng, a krom (regiment), which were given different names by the king. [1]

According to Wales this socio-administrative organisation, based partly on military expediency and partly on family relationships, was slightly modified after permanent settlements were established. He said, however, that "constant watchfulness still had to be maintained and so the form of this organisation remained military, the chief being both the headman of the village (nai ban) and military leader (nai kong thaharn), who owed feudal allegiance to the jaow muang, or 'lord of the country'. Several such muang constituted a feudal state governed by a king, having the title jaow phaen din, literally 'lord of the land'."[2]

During the reign of King Rama Kamhaeng (1275-1317) territories under the Siamese control were vastly expanded. What is presently known as Laos, part of Burma, Cambodia, and the Malay peninsula were embraced into Siam. To meet with the new administrative demands and military complexities, the kingdom was divided into three separate units: the royal capital or the "inner territory," the dependent cities or the "middle territory", and the "outer territory" composed of vassals. The king was both head of the civil government and

---

1. Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, Prachum phongsawadan phak thi sam tamnan kankenthahan (Collection of Chronicles Part 23: History of Military Conscription), Thaphrajan Press, Bangkok, 1966, pp. 45-46, translated by the writer.

2. Wales, p. 44.

commander-in-chief of the royal capital. All men except aliens in the royal city were considered both citizens and soldiers. A similar model applied to the dependent cities whose lords or jaow muang were appointed by the king. In the colonies, local administration was in the hands of the native rulers who were permitted to govern according to their customs and traditions.[1] In wartime, residents of a territory were recruited to form an army of that particular muang led by their own feudal lords or chiefs. They assisted the king either as an independent army or, as an integrated unit under the royal command, depending on the king's order.[2] Normally only troops of the dependent cities were assigned to assist in fighting. Those of the vassal states were employed primarily to guard the periphery of the kingdom.[3] This civil-military structure was maintained throughout the Sukhothai era and during the first hundred years of Ayuthya era (until about 1450). During this period there appears to have been little differentiation between the civil and the military and the king's subjects continued to be organised along military line.

In 1450, during the reign of King Trailok, (or Phra Boromtrailokkanat) the development of the Siamese administration took a new direction. With the 'Khmerisation' of the Thai court following the Thais' capture of Angkor Tom, the whole body of Siamese population was divided into two divisions, the civilian

---

1. Damrong, p. 31.
2. Ibid., p. 13.
3. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

and military.[1] The civilian division was given the name mahadthai, and the military division, kalahom. They were headed by the two highest non-royal officials whose rank was called "prime minister" (akkhara maha senabordi) - the prime minister of the civil affairs and the prime minister of military affairs. To indicate their authority and to enhance their office, a royal given name was attached to each of these two officials. On the mahadthai was bestowed the title of jaow phaya chakkri, and on the kalahom, jaow phaya mahasenabordi (customarily known as jaow phaya kalahom). As head of the civil affairs, the mahadthai was in charge of the four great civil offices: palace, treasury, city, and coutryside. The kalahom commanded the four military departments: the infantry, cavalry, elephants, and engineers. It is believed that the Thais derived this system of military organisation from ancient India where the army was divided into four divisions (catu ranga) namely, the infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots. Since the terrain in Siam did not permit the effective use of chariots, the Siamese substituted for them the engineers or skilled artisans.[2] Wales indicates that the construction of the four great departments of the civil administration (jatu sadom) was also patterned after the organisation of the military.[3]

---

1. According to Prince Damrong, "this custom of dividing the royal administration into military and civilian seemed to have begun as early as the first years of Ayuthya. It is, however, not yet clear whether this system derived from the Khmer or from the Siamese own invention," ibid., p. 19.

2. Wales, p. 141.

3. Ibid., p. 142.

This civilian-military distinction established by King Trailok and consolidated by his son, Rama Thibordi II, must have continued until at least 1688 for La Loubère confirmed that during the time of King Narai (1657-1688) the mahadthai and kalahom were given separate spheres of authority in very much the same manner as during King Trailok's reign.[1] However, it is clear that subsequently this system of separation of powers gradually became blurred and was later abandoned. The creation of the Registrar's Department (krom phra surassawadi) during the reign of Rama Thibordi II to undertake the registration of the population, in both the civilian and military departments, obscured the line between the two divisions. Subsequently, much of the vital responsibilities which formerly belonged to either the mahadthai or the kalahom were given to the Registrar's Department. These were the power of supervision, military conscription, and war preparations.[2] Hence the Registrar's Department soon became an important organisation equal to the two akkhraramaha senabodi. Similarly, the Treasury Department (khlang or phra khlang) gained prominence in the administrative hierarchy, largely through its power over foreign trade which were the monopoly of the king.[3] The heads

---

1. Ibid., p. 143.

2. Damrong, p. 25.

3. The Phra khlang was thus given the power over foreign relations which became its principal function. From this historical turning point emerged the embryo of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which was formally established two hundred years later by King Chulalongkorn.

of these two departments were granted the sakdina ranking of 10,000 rai[1] similar to the mahadthai and the kalahom. This new rivalry sharply reduced the powers of the two prime ministers. In the reign of King Prasart Thong (1628-1656), the kalahom lost ground in the power struggle; its Elephant Department was transferred to the mahadthai. The final blow to the system of civil-military separation came during the reign of King Phet Racha (1688-1703). In 1691, after a rebellion in the province of Nakhorn Srithamarat, an attempt was made to strengthen the authority of the central government, to eliminate overlapping responsibilities, and to expedite the war effort. In that process the king decided to resume the territorial concept of administration whereby areas outside of the royal capital were divided into North and South, instead of the functional concept of civilian and military. The mahadthai was entrusted with the power, civil and military, over the northern half of the kingdom whereas the kalahom was in full control of the South in similar fashion. This also made the mahadthai and the kalahom commander-in-chief of armies under their jurisdiction.

---

1. The sakdina (literally "prestige overland") was a system by which all Siamese, either king, commoner, or slave, were ranked in a hierarchical order according to land ownership. At the bottom of this hierarchy were two types of slaves, the redeemable and unredeemable whose sakdina status was nil. Above the slaves were free men whose sakdina status was 25 rai each (1 rai equal $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre). Next came the all powerful class of officials who were divided into two categories, royal and non-royal. Both groups were subdivided into numerous ranks and grades. The sakdina of the most important non-royal official was 10,000 rai whereas that of the king's son may have ranged from 15,000 to 40,000 rai depending on his rank and office. The sakdina of the king was beyond calculation.

The amalgamation of civilian and military authority was further complicated over the course of subsequent history. In late Ayuthya era, for example, all vassal states were taken from the jurisdiction of the kalahom and placed under the phra khlang. The reason behind this is said to have been that "the kalahom had in some way given offence to the king."[1] Whatever the true cause may have been, military-civilian distinction clearly ceased to be significant criteria. With the Bangkok era it became a common practice for various government agencies to maintain their own military, militia, or police forces.

Unlike Japan or India, Thailand has never had military class or caste. The military in old Siam was not regarded as a glamourous career. This was probably due to the fact that in war all able-bodied men were obliged to fight. And though in the past the Thais often engaged in warfare, they appeared to have no love for fighting.[2] Thus, a clear-cut line between civilian and military profession has not been profoundly developed. Even during the time of King Trailok, in which the distinction between the civilian and the military was forcefully fostered, the differentiations appeared to be more superficially imposed. As King Chulalongkorn put it:

---

1. Wales, p. 91.

2. Virginia Thompson, Thailand: The New Siam, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1941, p. 295.

> Formerly, our government administration was divided among six senabodi, two of whom occupied the position of akkharamaha senabodi, one in charge of the civil, the other, military. Organisationally, it seemed as though this was a civil-military division. After having checked the history, however, it did not appear to be so. The two prime m nisters did not have clear-cut absolute authority over either branch of the government. They were more like two registrars, one responsible for the civil population, the other, military. Even though laws governing the draft of slaves for civil and military work differed to some extent, in war time both sides served the king in similar manner.[1]

Hence, the situation of civil-military separation of powers in present day Thailand is an outcome of a long and somewhat confusing tradition. It is often said that the Thai farmers, who constitute eighty per cent of the population, can hardly distinguish civilian officials from those in the armed forces. This is partly due to the force of tradition and partly to the fact that the two are seldom differentiated by outlook and temperament. All Thai bureaucrats, it must be pointed out, were given uniforms which clearly indicate their rank, insignia and decorations. According to the "Law of Civil Military and Provincial Hierarchies" of 1454, the sakdina status of all officials was determined not by their positions in the civil or military, but by their hierarchical ranks within the monolithic bureaucracy. This system of gradation was patterned largely after the military ranking. After the great administrative reorganisation under King Chulalongkorn, a similar method persisted, and civilian grades and ranks were equated with those of the military.[2]

---

1. King Chulalongkorn, Phra rachadamrat songthalaeng phraborromracha-thibai kaekhai kanpokkhrong phaendin (Speech on the Change in Government Administration), Krom Samphasamit Press, Bangkok, 1967 pp. 62-63, translated by the writer.

2. See Appendix 1.

Under the present system of administration, bureaucratic ranks and grades of civil officials, military and police officers, as regulated by the Civil Service Act of 1954, were standardised throughout the national and provincial administrations. Consequently, it is legally as well as administratively feasible to transfer a military officer of a certain rank and grade to a civilian or police post of equivalent rank and grade; and conversely the civilian could transfer to the military. A number of high ranking, non-political officials have served in both the civil and the military, and some in the police.[1] It is customary for the top politicians to occupy several civilian, military and police positions simultaneously.[2]

---

1. The Police Department is part of the Ministry of Interior. However, due to the importance of its work in view of Thai politics, it is treated as if it was an independent ministry. Its ranking, orientation, and educational system are patterned after the armed forces.

2. For example, the present Prime Minister holds the rank of Field Marshal of the Armed Forces (Aarmy, Navy, and Air Force). He is also a General of the Police. Until recently he had been Rector of Thammasat University. Deputy Prime Minister Prapart Jarusathian is an Army General. He is also Minister of Interior, which controls the Police. He also held the post of Rector of Chulalongkorn University. General Prasert Rujirawong, the Chief of Police, has the rank of Army and Police general. Until recently he was also Rector of Chiengmai University.

II. The "Modernisation" of the Military

Western military technique and organisation were introduced to Siam for the first time by the Portuguese. In the "Law of Military Hierarchy of Ayuthya" a reference was made to the "Western-style Regiment" (krom had yang farang).[1] In the reign of King Narai (1657-1688), this regiment was prominent in the king's personal force. Largely due to cordial relation with France during this reign, a large number of Frenchmen served as officers and instructors in the Siamese armies. Prince Damrong indicated that this Western-style regiment was in active service throughout the Ayuthya era.[2] After the fall of Ayuthya in 1767, however, the practice was temporarily abandoned. It was not until the reign of King Rama III in 1831 that the krom had yang farang was reconstituted. This regiment was uniformed and drilled in the contemporary European fashion, and was led, this time, by an English officer.[3] By the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV) its name was changed to thahan na (front soldier). During the Chulalongkorn era, the thahan na was reorganised, expanded, and especially trained by a Thai officer.[4] Its members,(rapidly growing in number) were composed

---

1. Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, Tamnan kromthahanrab thi ha (Chronicle of the Fifth Infantry Regiment), Thaphrajan Press, Bangkok, 1966, p. 50.

2. Ibid.

3. His name was Thomas Knox, a retired army captain from India. He emigrated to Siam seeking employment and was introduced to Rama III by the kalahom, The king subsequently appointed him instructor in the newly reactivated unit. This unit became the fore-runner of the modern Thai army. Captain Knox later became Sir Thomas George Knox, the British Consul General to Siam. Ibid., p. 51.

4. Prayut Sitthiphan, Sang krung (Nation Building), Krungthorn Press, Bangkok, 1964, pp. 457-458.

largely of princes, royal pages, and the sons of high officials. The king, with the rank of Colonel-in-Chief, commanded this regiment personally. In 1871, the unit was formally decreed "the King's Guard Regiment," and became a thoroughly professionalised force. The success of this experiment led to the formation of many such regiments during the reign of King Chulalongkorn and in subsequent reigns.[1] Thus emerged the hard core of the modern Thai armed forces.

The threat of Western intrusion was a major preoccupation of King Chulalongkorn. He saw in the liberalisation of Siam, and the modernisation of the administration, the answers to this challenge. In April, 1887, the king proclaimed the "Law of Military Organisation" whereby all land and naval forces were separated from the mahadthai and the kalahom. They were brought under the control of a new organisation called krom yutthanathikan or the Department of War. Since, prior to this decree, each of the various troops was commanded by separate departments, the creation of the Department of War marked the first step in bringing the national armed forces under a unified administration. The Department of War was divided into seven sections, five of which dealt with Army matters and two with the Navy and the Marines.[2] In 1892, the office of the kalahom was re-established. This time it was to be known was the Ministry of Defence (krasuang kalahom). Originally it was designed to deal with the old-style military matters whereas the Department of War administered all modern military affairs. Two years later, however,

---

1. Ibid., pp. 458-459.

2. Prayut, pp. 460-461.

the Minister of Defence gained control over all military organisations and the Department of War was brought under its direct jurisdiction.[1] In 1931, the Admiralty, (which was formerly an independent organ) was also put under the Defence Ministry.[2] The modernisation of the Thai military was made complete in 1937 when the Air Force, a flying corps established during King Vajiravudh's reign, was brought under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence.[3]

Despite the success in restructuring the armed forces along Western lines the Thais appeared to have shown reluctance in shedding the old concepts and practices. It was not until the early 1900's that the kalahom was compelled to abandon its authority over the provincial administration in the southern part of the country. This authority was transferred to the Interior (mahadthai) Ministry headed by Prince Damrong. Prince Damrong, then a general in the Army, was among the organisers of the Department of War. He was ordered by his brother, King Chulalongkorn, to take charge of the newly created Ministry of Interior. Despite his liberalism, King Chulalongkorn was careful enough to put the control of the armed forces under the royal princes. Thus, most of his able sons were trained in the military schools of Great Britain, Denmark, Germany,

---

1. This may well illustrate the strength of the old polity and Siamese conservatism.

2. Thai Government, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Official Yearbook: 1964, Government House Printing Office, Bangkik, 1964, p. 166.

3. Ibid.

and Russia.[1] Upon their return they were given high posts in the armed forces. When leadership was needed in the civilian sphere, they were appointed civilian administrators. Similarly, army officers of lesser stature were from time to time transferred to posts formerly held by civilians: this was done when there seemed to have been the need for a "decisive action". The appointment of General Phaya Wichitsongkhram to the governorship of Phuket in 1902 was one such example. The General's appointment was hailed as the symbol of a sound decision and a complete success.[2]

Under the Meiji Reformation the samurai class of Japan was forced to relinquish its cherished position in exchange for government compensation. This bold action resulted in the samurai taking on a a new role in the rise of the Japanese Empire. The Thai military, however, has not experienced a discontinuity in the course of its long evolution. The "modernisation" of the Thai army, from its beginning in the 1830's under Rama III, coming into fruition with the establishment of the Ministry of Defence in 1892, was by no means a radical transformation. Despite formal organisational changes and the Western technological orientation, the Thai military outlook and temperament remained largely unchanged in substance. The great administrative reforms under King Chulalongkorn were not accompanied by any meaningful political reform.[3] Even the Revolution of 1932

---

1. Chula Chakrabongse, Lords of Life, Alvin Redman Ltd., London, 1960, pp. 237-285.
2. Thai Noi, Prawat chiwit bukkhon samkhan (Personalities), Vol.II Odeon Store Press, Bangkok, 1961, pp. 411-412.
3. This situation occurred despite the king's attempts at introducing a system of democratic processes through the creation of the Council of State and the Privy Council.

did little to alter the nature of the Thai military.[1] Not unlike the old sakdina officials, the present Thai officers do not seem to understand the meaning of military subordination to civilian control. They tend to think of themselves either as first among equal or even as "natural leaders" of the nation. Hence, one may rightly conclude that the modernisation of the Thai military was merely a veneer.

This artificial transformation of the Thai military may be amenable to a brief overview explanation. In the span of its seven-hundred-year history, Thailand has not experienced social change of a violent magnitude. It has not been through a humiliating period of colonisation, such as produced severe political, social, and economic dislocations, in many countries. Nor has Thailand entered the age of industrialisation. It was, and still is, a peasant society. The Thailand economy, observes David Wilson, is "predominantly pre-industrial - almost pre-commercial..."[2] And despite local wars and coups d'etat, Thailand's political and social changes have been fundamentally gradual, peaceful, and accomodating.[3] The pressure of overpopulation, as in Japan or India, was absent. And there was no serious problems of landlordism or economic deprivation, which would trigger a mass uprising. "History" states Wilson, "h s been generous with Thailand."[4] In

---

1. See Chapter II.
2. David A. Wilson, Political Tradition and Political Change in Thailand The RAND Corp., Santa Monica, California, 1962, p. 4.
3. Ibid., pp. 5-7.
4. David A. Wilson, "Thailand and Marxism," in Frank N. Trager, ed., Marxism in Southeast Asia: A Study of Four Countries, Stanford University Press, California, 1960, p. 74.

view of this "generosity" of history it is not difficult to see why the political or social systems of Thailand have not needed major alterations.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MILITARY IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL ERA

The two Chakkri monarchs, Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, succeeded so remarkably in their efforts to transform Siam into a modern nation that the dynamic forces set in motion could be neither clearly anticipated nor effectively controlled by their successors. King Vajiravudh, despite his occasional mismanagement and extravagance, was generally, a progressive ruler. He carried on and advanced many of his father's revolutionary programmes. He established Siam's first university, named after Chulalongkorn, and completed the much-needed legal codifications. His reign is considered a golden age of Siamese literature. Thus King Vajiravudh sustained and even accelerated the momentum of change in Siam. One of his most important decisions resulted in a Thai expeditionary force joining the Allies in the First World War, a personal triumph.[1] It enhanced the standing of his country as well as of its armed forces. Taking great pride in his country, King Vajiravudh was considered the leader of Thai intellectual nationalism.[2] Like King Chulalongkorn, he was an enthusiast and admirer of things Western. It was during his reign that a group of Army officers and students were sent to

---

1. For he made the decision despite the strong opposition of his ministers.

2. David A. Wilson, Politics in Thailand, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1962, p. 9.

study in Europe under the king's scholarships. Many of these were to become the hard core of the revolutionary party known as the "Promoters" (Phu korkan) who successfully seized power from King Prachathipok, Siam's last absolute monerch. Hence, ironically enough, it was a king of the Chakkri Family who pronounced the death senten e of his dynasty's benevolent rule in Siam.

The revolution that took place on 24 June, 1932 was by no means a popular uprising against the existing order. Yet it is unique in Siam's history. It destroyed, once and for all, the concept of absolute kingship based on semi-divine authority, and put power into the hands of educated commoners which were primarily members of the armed forces and the bureaucracy. Nevertheless, after the revolution the king of Siam continued to enjoy impressive popularity. "Democracy" became the basis of the political legitimacy claimed by auccessive governments. Thus, at least in theory, the concept of popular sovereignty was accepted as the principle of Siamese politics. For the first time the people were considered a political entity. The concept was expressed in the constitution and was formally recognised by the ruling class. It was largely this change in attitude that made the June, 1932 episode unique, and even revolutionary, in conservative Siam.[1]

Furthermore, the coup d'etat is unqiue in its manner of execution, its elaborate plans, tactics, and its employment of

---

1. For an excellent discussion on Thai conservatism see Stuart Simmonds, "Thailand: A Conservative State," in Saul Rose (ed.), Politics in Southern Asia, London and New York, 1963.

modern military power to compel compliance. Unlike the old feudalistic palace conspiracy, it even proclaimed ideological rationale. Indeed, this was new to Siam where expediency and pragmatism, not abstract idealism, had usually been the basis of political action. Undoubtedly, the roots of the revolution were not Thai but Western. The means employed, however, were unmistakably Thai.

The revolution of 1932 was the first military takeover in one hundred fifty years, since Bangkok was founded in 1782. Subsequent political dramas reveal quite clearly that the event has, to a great extent, become a classic example of the military coup d'etat in the contemporary era. It is an ironic example of violent political change in which no blood was shed.[1] Such a remarkable success led the coup makers to herald it as "the first peaceful revolution in the world."[2] And since then this coup d'etat has become a "model" to be emulated, successfully and disastrously, by various groups of political activists. The 1932 episode, moreover, has had a great impact on the civil military power structure of successive Thai governments. It has dictated the relationship between the military and the technocrats, the military and the business sector, and to a considerable extent, has had a lasting influence on Siam's foreign relations. In sum, the coup d'etat determines who shall get what, why, and how. The process is not

---

1. With the exception of an accidental shooting of General Phaya Sena Songkhram who was not fatally wounded.

2. W.Ch. Prasangsit, Phaendin somdet phra pokklao (The Reign of King Prachathipok), Phradung Chat Press, Bangkok, 1962, p. 216.

very different from the principles outlined in Lasswell's study of democratic government.[1] The main variance is that in the Siamese system the ultimate aim of political actions is to capture and maintain political power through the use of force or the threat of force and through the manipulation of public grievances, rather than through the election. It is necessary, therefore, that the events which occurred in the early morning of 24 June, 1932 be closely examined.

I. Making the Revolution

The seeds of the revolution in Siam had been planted in Europe many decades earlier. Military officers who were sent abroad to acquire Western military knowhow were among those Thais who came in contact with Western democratic ideas. Since Western political thinking could hardly be separated from Western technology, those military men became absorbed in political doctrines at the outset. Captain Plaek Khitasangkha and Lieutenant Thadsanai Mitphakdi were among the young Siamese students who were studying in France in the middle and late 1920's. Along with other civilians, headed by Pridi Phanomyong, they plotted the overthrow of Siam's absolute monarchy. Since much of the literature gives credit to this "Paris Group" as the initiators of the June revolution, it is appropriate to mention here the contribution of another equally important group. They were senior Army men who had studied in Germany prior to the outbreak of World War I. Despite the fact that it was the French-trained intellectuals who provided moral justifications and the overall plan - the "brain" of the revolution - it was the German-trained

1. Harold D. Lasswell, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How, World Publishing Co., New York, 1961.

officers who gave most of the "muscle" necessary to carry out the plot.

Western writers usually differentiate groups of Thai politicians imto "military" and "civilian". Perhaps it is more appropriate to regard the Siamese revolutionaries in terms of "younger" and "older" men. This is particularly helpful in the understanding of the 1932 revolution and the events that followed it. Men who were trained in Germany, most of whom were in their mid-fifties at the time of the revolution, belong to the older generation. They were all Army officers who were among the first group of commoners to receive a European education. Phaya Phahon Phonphayuhasena, Phaya Song Suradet and Phra Prasart Phithayayut[1] were accomplished men in the Army when they joined the plot. They enjoyed the ranks of colonel and the sakdina titles of Phra and Phaya, very high distinctions for commoners.[2] They had much to lose if the revolution failed.

The French-trained revolutionists were younger men whose specialisations ranged from military science to law and engineering. Pridi, Plaek, Thadsanai, and many others were in their early thirties at the time of the revolution. Though they had not achieved the high sakdina titles of Phra and Phaya as their senior colleagues had, they were already distinguished in their professions and were the envy of their less fortunate contemporaries. Most of them had been given the aristocratic title of Luang. Hence, Pridi was Luang Pradit

---

1. As called by their titles. Their names are Phot Phahonyothin, Thep Phanthumsen and Wan Chuthin respectively.

2. The sakdina, or aristocratic titles, comprise of Khun, Phra, Phaya and Jaov Phraya (arranged according to grade, Khun being the lowest.)

Manutham; Plaek was Luang Phibun Songkhram; and Thadsanai was Luang Thadsanai Niyomsuek, etc. Young, prestigious, with bright futures ahead of them they had most to gain if they waited patiently under the existing regime.

The the old and the young joined forces and risked their lives and everything they possessed in order to attempt the overthrow of the absolute government. Material wealth and social recognition proved to be insufficient to hold back their idealism and ambition. As well-educated men they were impressed by Western egalitarianism and came to despise their own political system which they considered archaic and evil. Naturally they resented the "celestial princes" who occupied high places in the society and in the government. And this resentment probably resulted from their liberal education and experience in the West. Phaya Phahon once said: "At the very base (of my reason for joining the coup) was the birth of the feeling that in the government at that time, high officials and princes acted according to their whim and were not willing to pay heed to smaller people even though there were reasons for believing them. The big boys mostly felt that the soundness of the lesser people were not important. What was important was whether or not it pleased them."[1]

---

1. Kulab Sai-pradit, Buanglang kanpatiwat 2475 (Behind the Revolution of 1932), Bangkok, 1947, p. 110, cited in David Wilson, "The Military in Thai Politics," in John J. Johnson (ed.), The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1962, p. 257.

The impact of Western democratic ideas upon the Siamese revolutionaries, symbolised by their political manifesto[1] announced on the eve of the revolution, was particularly evident in their intellectual leader, Dr. Pridi Phanomyong. Pridi was a country boy and the son of half-Chinese commoners. He won the king's scholarship for further post-graduate study in Paris in the 1920's. He had been a brilliant law student in Bangkok and had taught at the university before going to France. "Pridi," it is said, "was a serious thinker, a respected teacher and a supreme idealist."[2] He is thought to have adopted "radical Socialist" leanings[3] and

---

1. The Promoters declared that their political ideology was based on the following:

    1. The preservation of national sovereignty, political independence, economic independence, and judiciary independence.
    2. The preservation of internal peace and safety.
    3. The uplift of the people's happiness. The government will lay down a national economic programme to ensure the people of employment and economic well-being.
    4. The enjoyment of equality.
    5. The enjoyment of freedom, in so far as this freedom does not infringe upon the previous policies.
    6. The enjoyment of the most extensive education possible.

    Prasangsit, pp. 194-195, translated by the writer.

2. Withet Korani, Chiwit lae kantorsu khorng hasib ratthamontri (Lives of Fifty Ministers), P.A.N. Press, Bangkok, 1963, p. 262, translated by the writer.

3. Ibid., p. 263.

believed in revolutionary social changes. "The revolution in China and Russia," states a Thai writer, "intensified Pridi's interest in the revolution. He and his friends in France often held meetings to discuss about the revolution. In the eyes of his friends Pridi was a sage because he had more knowledge in the theoretical matters than anybody."[1] Upon his return, Pridi served in the Ministry of Justice and taught at the Law School. He is believed to have instilled in his students his belief in social democracy. "In the course of teaching law, Professor Pridi also indoctrinated his students in the revolutionary subjects. Sometimes he even conducted a mock Parliament at the School."[2] Thus the seeds of Western ideologies were by no means restricted to the foreign-trained elites but were rapidly passed on to the Thai-educated intelligensia. Though these men constituted a very small minority, they were the most dynamic force in the country.

In the minds of the Promoters, the democratic system represented the good and the just - the answer to Siam's weaknesses and backwardness. This belief was intensified by youth's idealism, the hope of relieving the poverty and misery of their fellow Siamese, which to the revolutionaries, were the direct result of the absolute monarchy. "We, who staged the Revolution, have no desire for personal gains as has happened in the past," said the Promoters, "but...work for the mutual benefit of the people."[3] The monarchy was also blamed

---

1. Ibid., pp. 263-264.
2. Ibid.
3. S. Khonpricha, Chumnum pathakatha khorng khon samkhan (Collected Lectures of Prominent Persons), Suwan Banphot Press, Bangkok, 1961, p. 845, translated by the writer.

for mismanagement and the economic crisis of the 1930's.[1] The old absolutism was held responsible for Siam's inability to catch up with the West which thus exposed the nation to external danger. As international crises brewed all around them, the Promoters felt that a drastic revolutionary change was warranted if Siam was going to survive as a free country. As they put it "...the only way to right those evil works (of the monarchy) is through a government by parliament. It is better to be ruled by many heads rather than one."[2]

Some writers have argued that the causes of the revolution in Thailand were "...the deeper roots (that) lay in the resentment of civil and military officials who had suffered in status and wealth by the actions of the last monarch."[3] However, one should be reminded that the coup leaders were mostly the cream of the government and were by no means seriously affected by the king's attempt to cure Siam's economic ills by raising taxes and cutting salaries of government officials. And though King Prachathipok became increasingly dependent upon his royal brother, able commoners continued to enjoy prestige and recognition. The revolutionaries were among

---

1. Sanit Jaroenrat, O wa ana pracharat (The People Grief), Phrae Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1964, pp. 81-83.
2. Siri Premjit, Prawatsat thai nai raborp prachathipatai samsib pi (The History of Thailand During 30 Years of Democracy), Kasem Banakit Press, Bangkok, 1962, p. 29, translated by the writer.
3. Wendell Blanchard (ed.), Thailand: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture, HRAF Press, New Haven, 1958, p. 121.

those who gained immensely from the regime and were under obligation to the monarchy for their excellent education. Besides, King Prachathipok was far more liberal and tolerant than his brother, King Wajiravudh. For example, he allowed Pridi to finish his studies despite the report that Pridi was a "dangerous man" and "a red."[1] And although some individual Promoter may have had personal grievances against the monarchy, this was by no means applicable to the entire group. As for the Depression of the 1930's, it was a comparatively small stimulant to the revolution in Siam. Siam at that time was largely a peasant society, far removed from the problems of a money economy. She was thus only slightly affected by the Depression. As Virginia Thompson rightly says: "The depression did not cause the revolt, but it afforded a convenient background and facilitated its execution."[2]

It was on 5 December, 1921 in Paris that a group of young students met for the first time to draw up a plan of revolution. It was composed of eight students, six civilians and two officers. They were Pridi Phanomyong, Prayoon Phamornmontri, Khuang Aphaiwong, Tua Laphanukrom, Naeb Phahonyothin, Luang Siri Rachamaitri, Captain Plaek Khitasangkha, and Lieutenant Thadsanai Mitphakdi. It was agreed that first, the plotters would seek knowledge about

---

1. John Coast, Some Aspects of Siamese Politics, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1953, p. 4.

2. Virginia Thompson, Thailand: The New Siam, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1941, p. 61.

the execution of revolutions; secondly, that they would try to recruit more supporters for the group; and finally, that they would seek the financial assistance necessary for making the revolution.[1] The group gradually expanded to include other students in England. The leader of the group was Pridi, a brilliant law student at the University of Paris, who was president of the Thai Students Association in France. The Association was used as a training ground for their revolutionary activities. Emphasis was placed on rebelling against the high-handed treatment of the Thai Minister in Paris. The Association was eventually closed by order of the king.[2]

After returning to Siam most of the agitators served in government ministries. Although the majority of the Promoters and its leaders were civilians, it was understood that the revolution could be accomplished only through military action.[3] Efforts were thus made to enlist the participation of other officers. Prayoon Phamornmontri achieved a breakthrough by enlisting two Army colonels, Phaya Phahon and Phaya Song, into the group.[4] The senior men became

---

1. Jakrawan Channuwong, Jormphon thanorm kittikhajorn phonek praphat jarusathian lae warasutthai khorng jormphon por phibunsongkhram (Field Marshal Thanom Kittikhajorn, General Praphat Jarusathian and the Downfall of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram), Maeban Karnruan Press, Bangkok, 1964, pp. 136-137.
2. Coast, p. 3.
3. Wilson comments on this point that "It is difficult to imagine any action which would have had any hope of success without military participation." Wilson, The Military, p. 258.
4. He became acquainted with them through his mother, a German, who gave Phaya Phahon and Phaya Song language instructions before they went for their advanced studies in Germany, Saowarak, Tua tai tae chue yang (Fame Beyond Death), Kuakun Press, Bangkok, 1965, pp. 241-242.

the central figures within the plotters' Army faction. They brought with them other military supporters, their friends, and students. Other important persons who became active members were Colonel Phra Prasart Phithayayut and Colonel Phaya Ritthi Akkhaney. The two men held commanding positions in the Army which were vital to the success of the revolution.[1]

Siam's intellectual ferment was not altogether ignored by the monarchy. Some royal persons, Prince Chakrabongse for one, suggested to the king that he should grant a constitution. Prince Wan Waithayakorn, an eminent diplomat and scholar, tactfully gave a press interview praising the virtues of democracy. He added, however, that it should be adopted gradually "so that the people could learn to exercise these new practices step-by-step."[2] Contrary to Western observers' assertions, the public, especially in the cities, was quite articulate about the need for political reforms. Thai newspapers had for sometime given accounts of events in foreign countries and had taken every opportunity to make propaganda for a democratic form of government.[3] News of the revolution in China, which led to a plea to renegotiate Siam's unequal treaties, was exploited by various agitators which linked

---

1. However Phaya Ritthi was reluctant to throw the troops he commanded behind the revolution hence, creating suspicious consternation among the plotters.

2. Sanit, pp. 94-95.

3. Ibid., p. 85.

it to internal policies.[1] The press was strongly warned by the regime "not to play politics."[2] Aware of the public discontent King Prachathipok hinted to the American press that he was preparing to grant a constitution.[3] It was believed that the king planned to give Siam its constitution on 6 April, 1932 to commemorate the founding of the Chakkri Family. However, when the date arrived there was no sign of political reforms. The intellectuals and the public were dissillusioned, and there were rumours of coups and counter-coups. The king was informed that some plots were being organised by the armed forces. In one of his speeches, he gave the advice that "soldiers should not meddle in politics."[4]

The king's warning came too late. The military was already busy plotting his downfall. As the conspiracy gathered momentum its leadership was transferred from the civilian to the military. Colonel Phaya Phahon became the leader of the plot partly because of his seniority and partly because of his benevolent and moderate nature. The success or failure of the plan depended entirely on military action. Thus military men in the junior faction such as

---

1. Sir Josiah Crosby, Siam: The Crossroads, Hollis and Carter Limited, London, 1945, p. 77.
2. Sanit, p. 91.
3. Chula Chakrabongse, Lords of Life, Alvin Redman Limited, London, 1960, p. 305.
4. Thompson, p. 302.

Major Phibun and Lieutenant Commander Luang Sinthu of the Navy, would not lead it themselves. Senior Army officers, Colonels Phaya Song and Phra Prasart, were given the task of military planning. Pridi was responsible for the drafting of the constitution to be presented to the king and for other important political matters such as measures to prevent foreign interventions.[1] Phibun, also a brain behind the military operation, became an ideal co-ordinator between the military and the civilians. Young and French-trained, he suited well with the majority of the Promoters who were civilian. Phibun also shared the profession and military temperament with his senior Army colleagues. In spite of his influence and tremendous energy, Phibun stayed in the background.

Interestingly, the revolution could be called the "professors' plot" for each of its five leaders was an Ajarn (professor, lecturer) in some institution in Siam. Pridi was a professor of law at the Thai Bar Association where he had a large following. Phaya Phahon was an Ajarn in the Army's General Staff Department.[2] Phaya Song was the Commandant of the Military Academy with a considerable reputation among military intellectuals.[3] Phra Prasart was the

---

1. On this particular point Crosby disclosed that the "chief anxiety (of the Promoters) was that France or England might send military forces to protect their nationals," Crosby, p. 57.

2. Kenneth P. London, Siam in Transition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1939, p. 25.

3. Saowarak, p. 45.

the Commandant of the Army's General Staff College, the highest educational institution in the armed forces. Phibun, a product of Fontainebleau, was a famous lecturer at the same institution. Hence it is not surprising to find that a number of the Promoters and their collaborators were at one time or another pupils of these men.[1] It was within the academic home and atmosphere, modelled upon the West, that democratic ideas in Siam were first taught and nurtured. Only the intimate relationship between teacher and disciple and their mutual trust could make possible an indulgence in these "dangerous" thoughts under the eyes of the princes. It is thus understandable that it was these people who took upon themselves the task of translating the academic into the real.

Shortly before the revolution, Bangkok was indeed the city of rumours. Various tales of imminent uprisings went around coffee shops and private parties. They were said to have been the work of the Promoters to fathom the government's reactions.[2] It is believed that their original plan of action was called off for the police were informed of the revolt, and the Bangkok garrison under General Phaya Sena Songkhram was ready to crush the revolution.[3] As originally planned, the coup d'etat was to take place on the day Rama VII was to perform a ceremony opening a new bridge named after Rama I. In spite of the first postponement, rumours continued. But since their sources could not be discovered, the authorities paid

---

1. The postwar premiers, Khuang, Seni and Thawi, also referred to Pridi as Ajarn although they had never been his students.
2. Withet Korani, 1963, pp. 84-85.
3. Thai Noi, Prawat bukkhon samkhan (Personalities), Vol.I, Odeon Store Press, Bangkok, 1961, pp. 612-613.

less and less attention to them. This somewhat peculiar tactic proved vital to the success of the revolution. It saved the Promoters and their collaborators from the hands of the Bangkok Metropolitan Police. Revealing this fascinating incident, Sir Josiah Crosby writes:

> The story of what took place on the eve of the coup d'etat, as related to me by persons having first-hand knowledge of it, is astonishing. The Chief of the Bangkok Police was aware of the plot and knew who were its principal instigators. The night before the uprising he visited a certain high-ranking Prince in a position of great authority, informed him of what was afoot and begged for permission to arrest the leading conspirators. This permission was refused, the Prince in question declining to believe the report thus furnished to him and remarking that he had heard such tales before and that all of them had proved to be unfounded. 1

As a matter of fact, there were many kinds of rumours at that time and all of them turned out to be to the advantage of the plotters. The first involved whispered stories of a coup d'état which not only served to convince the authority that the information was "unfounded" but also to confuse the police. Upon learning of the coup, most of the responsible officials pointed suspicious fingers at Prince Boworadet, the ex-Defence Minister who had been at odds with the government. Hence, their attentions were diverted from the real instigators. This type of rumour was also used as a political barometer to measure public opinion and the reaction of certain military leaders. In this way the Promoters knew who were their friends and enemies. The second kind of rumour concerned

---

1. Crosby, p. 79.

bad omens and speculative stories about the fall of the Royal Family. For example, it was reported that a nun in white robe was seen at the Memorial Bridge at night. Others said that they saw the late King Taksin[1] crossing the bridge.[2] There was a story about a large number of vultures, considered bad luck for the Thais, gathering at the Phramane Ground in the heart of Bangkok. All of these tales were believed to forecast the eventual downfall of the monarchy. When a comet appeared in the sky of Bangkok people said that something disastrous was forthcoming. The king was so concerned about the deteriorating state of public morale that he invited a German astronomer to explain the phenomena.[3] Yet rumours persisted. It is believed that some of this bad news was the inegious work of Colonel Phaya Song, hoping to undermine the mystical power of the absolute monarchy.[4] Whatever the truth may have been, the atmosphere was ripe for the revolution.

At three o'clock in the morning of 24 June, 1932, a group of Army officers had a rendezvous near a railway track at Bangsue in the suburbs of Bangkok. The group was primarily composed of officers of the Military Academy, the Staff College, and the Army Signals.[5]

---

1. Who was executed by Rama I, founder of the Chakkri House. The bridge was constructed to commemorate the one-hundred-fifty-year reign of the Chakkri Dynasty.
2. Landon, p. 10.
3. Withet Korani, p. 88.
4. Ibid., p. 84.
5. Saowarak, p. 73.

The leaders of the gathering were Colonels Phaya Phahon and Phaya Song. The officers assembled there were told that the revolution in Siam had begun. They then marched towards the Anantasamkhom Palace, the would-be headquarters of the rebels, led by tanks from the Cavalry Regiment. On their way they were joined by other forces from the Artillery Regiment, the Army Engineers, and the Army Signals. As they arrived at the Palace, they were met with troops from the Navy led by a handful of junior officers. A declaration was read in front of the troops by Phaya Song maming Phaya Phahon the "military caretaker of Bangkok." Phaya Phahon once again proclaimed the birth of the revolution. A long declaration, believed to be the work of Pridi,[1] justifying the Promoters' (now called the People's Party) action was read. It strongly denounced the monarchy and the Royal Family. Phaya Phahon announced that anyone who opposed the revolution would be executed.[2]

The threat of execution would have seemed unnecessary, had all the men gathered there been supporters of the Promoters. The fact is that they were not. "here were only sixty-one persons in all who are believed to have been the chief instigators.[3] A number of officers involved were told only hours earlier that they were to

---

1. It is said that the pamphlets containing the declaration were printed by the same press Pridi used to publish his text-books. And that, hidden in a sampan floating along the Jao Phraya River, Pridi and his trusted students had worked all night for their distribution in the morning of the revolution, Withet Korani, p. 266.

2. Saowarak, p. 86.

3. Prasangsit, pp. 230-234.

participate in a conspiracy, and had no other choice but to go along with the fast moving event.[1] The majority of non-commissioned officers and enlisted men were merely led by their commanders into what they thought was to be a regular military exercise. Many innocent units, along with their superior officers, were drawn into the gathering upon receiving an urgent order to participate in an "anti-aircraft demonstration."[2] As soon as they arrived at the scene their commanders were either reshuffled or replaced by officers of the Promoters,[3] preventing them from making any undesirable move. The revolutionary party succeeded remarkably well in giving an appearance of strength and unity, as if all of Siam's armed forces were behind the revolution.[4] There were troops from various branches of the military, presided over by high ranking officers such as Phaya Phahon and Phaya Song. A picture of the king's palace surrounded by tanks and artillery was created. There were soldiers making aggressive shouts here and there. Military vehicles drove in and out carrying live ammunitions and fresh troops. Indeed, it was a picture of determination and success. Thus while there were men who disagreed with the Promoters' action, no one dared to oppose them.

---

1. Saowarak, pp. 74-75.
2. Ibid., pp. 76-77.
3. Ibid., pp. 84-85.
4. However, there is no mention of the Air Force's participation in the revolution.

Meanwhile, tanks under the command of Phra Prasart and Luang Phibun were on their way to take as hostages prominent princes and high ranking officials. Most of these formidable vehicles were operated by the students of the Staff College whom Phra Prasart had previously trained for such a mission under the pretext of "education."[1] Men of the old order were brought to the revolutionary headquarters, some in their sleeping attire. Among these was the Prince of Nakhorn-Sawan, the most powerful man behind the throne. Others included General Phaya Siharat Dechochai, the Army Chief-of-Staff, Police General Phaya Athikornprakat, the Chief of Police, General Phaya Chalermakat, the Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force, Police General Prince Wongnirachorn Thewakun, Chief of the Metropolitan Police, Colonel Prince Nagkhatmongkhon, Assistant Army General Staff, and the scholarly Prince Damrong Rachanuphap and Prince Narisara Niwattiwong.[2] General the Prince of Kamphaengphet escaped arrest and was on his way to Hua Hin where the king was spending his vacation. Subsequently, the Prince of Nakhorn-Sawan was "requested" to issue an order prohibiting the movement of all government troops so as to "keep the peace and prevent the unnecessary shedding of blood."[3] Since the prince was the most powerful figure in the regime, the revolution was almost complete.

---

1. Thai Noi, Personalities (I), pp. 297-301.
2. Prasangsit, pp. 189-190.
3. Ibid.

It was up to the king whether to accept the fait accompli or to turn it into a civil war. A gunboat under the command of Luang Supha Chalasai, an original Promoter, was sent to meet the king. It bore a message to King Prachathipok which read:

> The People's Party consisting of civil and military officials have now taken over the administration of the country and have taken members of the Royal Family such as H.R.H. Prince of Nakhorn-Sawan as hostages. If members of the People's Party have received any injuries the prince held in pawn will suffer in consequence. The People's Party have no desire to make a seizure of the Royal possessions in any way. Their principal aim is to have a constitutional monarchy. We therefore enjoin Your Majesty to return to the Capital to reign again as king under the constitutional monarchy as established by the People's Party. If Your Majesty refuses to accept the offer or refrains from replying within one hour after the receipt of this message the People's Party will proclaim the Constitutional monarchial government by appointing another prince whom they consider to be efficient to act as king.1

The king called an emergency meeting composed of princes and high ranking officials who were with him at Hua Hin. Chief among them were General Prince Alongkot, the Deputy Defence Minister, General Phaya Pichai Songkhram, the Commander of the First Army, and General the Prince of Kamphaengphet who had fled from Bangkok. They urged the king to suppress the revolt with troops from provincial garrisons. Unwilling to give up their authority and knowing very little about the extent of the Promoters' power, the old elite was ready to go to battle. A plane was to be dispatched with the king's order to all provincial troops.[2] Luang Supha Chalasai, commander of the Sukhothai gunboat sent by the Promoters to take the king to

---

1. Landon, pp. 9-10, for the Thai text see Saowarak, pp. 123-124.

2. Saowarak, pp. 155-157.

Bangkok, declared his loyalty to the monarch.[1] The Second Army under the command of General Prince Thong Thikhayu was ready to march on Bangkok.[2] Other troops in the capital which did not join the revolution were waiting for the king's order.[3] The extent of the king's remaining military power combined with his popularity were indeed formidable. Yet King Prachathipok yielded to the demands of the revolutionaries. The reasons for this decision were well-expressed in his letter to the Promoters:

> To the Military in Defence of Bangkok:
>
> I have received the letter in which you invite me to return to Bangkok as constitutional monarch. For the sake of peace; and in order to save useless bloodshed; to avoid confusion and loss to the country; and, more, because I have already considered making this change myself, I am willing to co-operate in the establishment of a constitution under which I am willing to serve.
>
> Furthermore, there is a possibility that, if I decline to continue in my office as King, the foreign powers will not recognise the new government. This might entail considerable difficulty for the government.
>
> Physically I am not strong. I have no children to succeed me. My life expectancy is not long, at least if I continue in office. I have no desire for position or for personal aggrandisement. My ability to advance the progress of the race alone constrains me.
>
> Accept this sincere expression of my feeling.
>
> Prachathipok.[4]

Thus, the revolution was a complete success. The king demonstrated courageously that he was more concerned with the

---

1. Thai Noi, Personalities (I), p. 175.
2. The decision was taken without the king's knowledge.
3. Prasangsit, p. 192.
4. Cited in Landon, p. 10.

country than his personal power. He promptly returned to Bangkok and gave his blessing to an interim constitution, in spite of the fact that it reduced him to a mere figurehead. He issued a decree granting pardons to all members of the Promoters. A committee composed of civilians was set up to draft a permanent constitution. Although the country was under the strict control of the Military Council of Bangkok, led by Phaya Phahon, the situation quickly returned to normal.[1]

It should be noted that while the revolution did not represent a mass uprising, it did not lack popular support. The people, to a large degree, welcomed this change, for they too were not altogether immune from the impact of democracy. This was one of the reasons why many troops which did not participate in the revolt preferred to stay silent rather than fight for the king. Contrary to the assertions of some Western writers who feel that the Thai people did not care one way or the other about the revolution, it is recorded in many Thai language publications that the public was jubilant as they heard that the revolution had succeeded.[2] Admittedly, the extent to which they really understood the significance of the political drama which took place in June, 1932, is questionable. Yet to dismiss entirely their moral support and sentiments, no matter how passive and naive they might appear, would be a grave mistake.

---

1. Thompson, p. 63.

2. See, for example, Prasangsit, p. 191; Saowarak, pp. 128-129.

II. Learning Political Lessons

Considerable time had passed since military men had last seized the government of Siam by force. One hundred and fifty years had elapsed since General Jao Phraya Chakkri had overthrown King Taksin, and was proclaimed Rama I. Under Kings Chulalongkorn (Rama V) and Vajiravudh (Rama VI) attempts were made to separate the armed forces from the civilian bureaucracy. Though military officers were at times appointed to civilian posts, the two branches of government became increasingly distinct as well as professionalised. The adoption of Western military technology culminating in the reign of King Prachathipok automatically compelled military men to concentrate on their specialised responsibilities. King Prachathipok, himself a well-trained career officer, was also a product of that development. Perhaps even more remarkable was the progress within the civil administration, for it was rapidly consolidated under the guidance of European and American advisors.[1] Civilian professions became more complicated and respectable after the return of a new generation of young administrators from Europe and America. Gone was the time when the officers looked down upon civilian technocrats. This state of affairs contributed to a large extent to political decisions made after the June, 1932 coup d'etat; for it was the belief that soldiers were not able to run the

---

1. Crosby, pp. 37-39.

government that kept the Thai military from taking over the top posts of the Cabinet. This decision was to prove a "mistake," at least from the point of view of the military elite.

It also appears that the officers were at that time primarily concerned with the reorganisation of the armed forces rather than the domination of the civil government. There was, for example, an attempt to remodel the Army and make it more like the Swiss military and thereby eliminate most of the generals.[1] The Staff College was abolished and the new War College established.[2] Military men of the Promoters were at the same time preoccupied with the problem of strengthening their position and eliminating the royalty and "undesirable elements" from the armed forces. Hence all princes were retired from the services, and forty-one officers were dismissed.[3] Royal troops under the banner of Raksa Phraong (The King's Bodyguard) were reduced from eight battalions to one.[4] As for the supporters of the Promoters, ten Army officers were promoted to the rank of major,

---

1. Net Khemayothin, Chiwit naiphon (Life of a General), Social Science Association of Thailand Press, Bangkok, 1966, pp. 11-12.

2. Saowarak, p. 212.

3. Walter F. Vella, The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955, p. 373.

4. Thai Noi, 11 Nayokratthamontri thai (Thailand's Eleven Premiers) Kawna Press, Bangkok, 1967, p. 25.

four to lieutenant-colonel, and twenty-two to colonel. Five Navy men were elevated to the rank of captain.[1] Phaya Phahon became the Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

The post of Prime Minister was given to Phaya Manopakorn Nitithada, a civilian bureaucrat who did not have any part in the revolution.[2] Phaya Nano (as he was customarily called), a British-trained barrister, was Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, and was believed to have democratic leanings. He was also Pridi's former teacher at the Law School and was the latter's candidate for the post. The fact that his appointment was made over General Prince Boworadet, the candidate of the military faction, shows the considerable influence of the civilians. Military men are reported to have been convinced that the assumption of such a position by an officer would be incompatible with the principle of democracy.[3] However, the fact that they proposed an Army general for such a post, made their sincerity questionable. As for the civilian Promoters, they considered themselves too young and inexperienced to handle the management of government.[4] Consequently, all key posts in the Cabinet (called the Council of Ministers) were given to senior officials who had previously served the monarchy. They included an Army general who held the post of Minister of Defence, while de

---

1. Landon, p. 17.
2. Siri, p. 24.
3. Pla Thong, Phak kammuang thai (Thai Political Parties), Kawna Press, Bangkok, 1965, p. 6.
4. Vella, p. 173.

facto military power was in the hands of Phaya Phahon and his Army colleagues.

This tactic of denying themselves essential political authority while maintaining military power proved disastrous to the Promoters; a mistake they would not repeat. The Prime Minister, a conservative, was known for his close association with the Royal Family.[1] It is believed, moreover, that he co-operated with the new ruling party because of personal grievances rather than ideological conviction.[2] The majority of the civilian officials who were chosen to draft the permanent constitution and to head the ministries were also of conservative outlook, and thus, were largely loyal to the Throne. As a consequence, the interim constitution authored by Pridi was altered drastically. Whereas the king was virtually powerless under the interim constitution, the new document gave him substantial authority. Cheif among them were power to veto any proposed legislation (Article 39), to dissolve the National Assembly (Article 21), to enact emergency decrees (Article 52), to declare a state of emergency (Article 53), and to grant pardons (Article 55). The king was also named the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.[3]

---

1. Thai Noi, Prasopkan 34 pi haeng rabob prachathipatai (Thirty-Four Years of Democracy), Phrae Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1966, p. 23.

2. Vella, p. 369.

3. The Lawyers Association of Thailand, Ratthathammanun chabab pathommaroek jon thueng rang patjuban (Collected Constitutions from the First Constitution to the Present Draft), Ruammit Thai Press, Bangkok, 1965, pp. 1-28.

This political turning point is described as a personal victory for King Prachathipok and the conservatives.[1] As for the Promoters, it was their first set-back, and especially so for the civilian faction who were committed to the economic and social reforms promised by the revolution.

Lacking knowledge of government and having no programme of its own, the military was content with the constitution and the conservative regime. In fact it had reason to be satisfied for the armed forces were given a "fair" share in the government, seven out of eighteen Cabinet posts were occupied by officers. Two-thirds of the appointed members of the National Assembly belonged to the military.[2] The civilian Promoters viewed the shift towards the old order as a necessary compromise, as they put it, "to bridge the old and the new."[3] They needed Phaya Mano and his colleagues to give respectability to the revolution in the eyes of foreign powers. The gesture was also intended as a demonstration of their unselfish sincerity.[4] Both the military and the civilian thought that they would be able to manipulate the Prime Minister.[5]

---

1. Thompson, p. 68.
2. Ibid., p. 75.
3. Thai Noi, Eleven Premiers, p. 17.
4. Pla Thong, p. 7.
5. Supphawit and Not Chuachawalit, Muangthai nai rabob rathasapha (Thailand in the Parliamentary System), Borphit Press, Bangkok, 1967, p. 12.

The conservatives, however, were plotting a silent coup to turn back the clock. The counter-coup became evident when Pridi proposed his Economic Plan, which the Prime Minister promptly denounced as communistic. The king was drawn into the political struggle when he permitted Phaya Mano to publish his "white paper" in which the monarch bluntly accused Pridi of "copying Stalin."[1] Admitting his "radical socialist" leaning, Pridi denied the charges. He expressed his willingness to modify the plan according to the wish of the majority. Neverthless, the pressure against him was dangerously mounting and Pridi was advised to go abroad at the government's expense. After having been assured by his military supporters (Phahon and Phibun) that "the wrong would be righted,"[2] Dr. Pridi left Siam. Pridi's friends and followers were outraged and the National Assembly demanded a debate on the Economic Plan. The Mano government was threatened with a vote of no-confidence. Instead of allowing the Assembly to discu s the matter, the Prime Minister obtained a royal decree closing down the legislature. He also suspended the constitution and ruled by royal prerogative. Phaya Mano justified his actions by saying that there was a Communist menace, and added that the "safety of the people is the highest law of the land."[3] The government closed down many newspapers which were critical of its administration.[4] Siam was virtually under a

---

1. Thompson, p. 72.
2. Withet Korani, p. 108.
3. Sanit, p. 104.
4. Supphawit and Not, p. 24.

dictatorship, but not of the military.

An element of the armed forces was actually behind the Premier's bold moves. This seems understandable as Phaya Mano could not possibly have taken such drastic measures without the support of the officers. It is said that a number of the military men within the Promoters were among those who plotted the return of the absolute monarchy. The following was part of the court testimonies given by eleven Promoters regarding the conspiracy:[1]

> Luang Pradit Manutham (Pridi) proposed that the government in the future must above all help and lead the people in their economic endeavours. Phaya Manopakorn Nitithada, Phaya Sri Wisanwaja and Phaya Ratcha Wangsan did not oppose (the plan) and even expressed their pleasure at Luang Pradit's proposal. Later, Phaya Mano told Luang Pradit that Phra Pokklao (Rama VII) wanted to see him and Phaya Phahon Phonphayuhasena. The king spoke about the state of the national economy and asked for Luang Pradit's opinion. Luang Pradit informed the king of what he had discussed with Phaya Mano, Phaya Sri and Phaya Ratcha Wangsan. The king expressed his admiration and agreed (with Pridi). The king said, furthermore, that he favoured Socialism and that he was a Socialist himself. Hence, he told Luang Pradit to draw up an economic plan. When Luang Pradit had not yet written the plan, Phaya Mano urged him saying that the king was pleased (with the idea). Luang Pradit, therefore, wrote the Economic Plan. The fact that he did not write it earlier was because he had many urgent matters on hand, such as the drafting of the permanent constitution. After having finished the Economic Plan, he had it published and circulated among the Promoters and members of the Council of Ministers...After its distribution, Phaya Mano disapproved of the Plan saying that he had visited the king and the king also disapproved of it. Luang Pradit was not convinced. He requested

---

1. The trial was conducted in a "Special Court" (San Phiset) in November, 1939. A group of officers and civilians were charged with the attempt to assassinate Phibun and to overthrow the government. The men who testified were Phaya Phahon Phonphayuhasena, Luang Sinthu Songkhramchai, Luang Thamrong Nawasawat, Luang Pradit Manutham, Colonel Prayoon Phamornmontri, Nai Sanguan Tulalak, Police Colonel Khun Srisakorn and Major Khun Sujarit Ronnakan.

> an official meeting in order to explain (the Plan) to the members...The meeting was divided between those who approved and those who disapproved. The latter were composed of Phaya Mano, Phaya Song Suradet and Phaya Sri Wisanwaja... Subsequently, Phaya Song called a meeting of officers in which he called Luang Pradit a Communist...The fact that Phaya Mano was able to close the National Assembly was because Phaya Song and colleagues, who were in control of the armed forces, supported his action. Before the closure of the Assembly, Prince Wibun Sawatwong, the king's personal secretary, had written many letters to Phaya Mano saying that the Assembly could not function and that it should be abolished. In order to do so, Phaya Mano and Phaya Song suggested Phaya Phahon to take a vacation so they would have the opportunity to close the National Assembly without Phahon's obstruction. When Phaya Phahon returned to Bangkok, Phaya Mano compelled him to co-sign an announcement closing the Assembly. Phaya Phahon refused, but subsequently had to sign. He thought it was better to remedy the situation afterwards...1

Thus it appears that there was a serious split within the Army faction of the Promoters soon after the revolution. As a matter of fact, since the beginning of their alliance, the relationship between the older and younger officers was far from happy. There was evidence of serious antagonism between Colonel Song and Major Phibun during the planning stage of the coup d'etat.[2] Senior men gradually felt the rivalry of their young, ambitious colleagues. The success of the revolution demonstrated quite clearly the power and influence of the junior officers. It proved that men in the relatively low ranks of major, captain and lieutenant (not colonel or general) command the units and the loyalty of soldiers upon whom the success or failure of a coup

---

1. Khathadam, Susan nakkanmuang (Politician's Graveyard), Phanfa Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1963, pp. 180-191, translated by the writer.

2. Withet Korani, pp. 89-90.

d'etat depends. This is due to the fact that company commanders (majors or captains) and platoon leaders (captains or lieutenants) are naturally closer to their troops in the barracks than the desk-bound colonels or generals. And it follows that royal princes who occupied high places in the armed forces prior to the revolution eventually lost the allegiance of their men. Besides antagonism and personal jealousy, there was a problem of generation gap among the Promoters. Senior officers, Phaya Song, Phaya Ritthi and Phra Prasart for instance, belonged to the same generation and background as the conservative civilians. They were the commoner aristocrats (Khunnang) who had long enjoyed power under the umbrella of the monarchy. Brought up to revere kingship and adhere to tradition, they regarded many of their young colleagues' ideas radical and even dangerous. Pridi's Economic Plan confirmed their fears which Phaya Mano was not slow to exploit. With Pridi in exile and the National Assembly closed, the new coalition, comprised of senior officers from the Promoters and the conservatives, planned to oust Phibun and his junior faction - the last remnant of the revolutionaries.

As it was later disclosed, the conservative's coup began as early as one month after the revolution, long before the realignment between the senior colonels and Phaya Mano. Colonel Song was alleged to have called a secret meeting of his followers to consider a complete overhaul of the Army, without the knowledge of Phaya Phahon, the senior Promoter and Commander-in-Chief of the Army. One month after the alleged meeting, Phaya Song attempted to transfer Phibun and his followers from their politically vital combat posts

to non-combat positions, and to put his own men in their places. This plan failed for Phibun was informed of the plot and many key officers strongly opposed it. The young Promoters, both in the armed forces and the Assembly, were outraged at Pridi's exile and Phaya Mano's dictatorial powers. Colonel Song thus called another m eting of junior Army officers warning them "not to criticise or oppose the Prime Minister."[1] When he realised that they were in disagreement with him, the Colonel proposed sending them abroad for "advanced studies." However, dissension was so strong that the attempt to get rid of them failed. When the dispute between Premier Phaya Mano and the young Promoters developed into a crisis, Phaya Mano, upon the suggestion of the Crown and with the full consent of Colonel Song and his colleagues, declared the National Assembly closed.[2]

To get rid of the younger officers, however, it was necessary to remove Colonel Phaya Phahon, the Army Chief who remained faithful to the young revolutionaries. Although he belonged to the older generation and was an intimate friend of the three colonels (Song, Prasart, Ritthi), Phaya Phahon was sympathetic with his young colleagues. A person of humble birth, he was extremely popular with the masses. The moderate Phahon also served as a bridge between the old and the young Promoters. Regarding himself ignorant in political and economic matters, Phahon was willing to go along with the advice of the civilians. His powerful position at the head of

---

1. Khathadam, pp. 176-188.

2. Ibid., pp. 188-193.

the Army guaranteed the dominance and safety of the men who made the revolution. Hence, no drastic actions against members of the Promoters could be taken without his approval. And since Phahon could not be removed by force, it was decided among the conservatives that he had to be eliminated through the power of persuasion.

Subsequently, everyone was taken by surprise when the four military leaders, Phahon, Song, Ritthi and Prasart, resigned. The event was interpreted by most Western writers as a "protest" by the military against the government's dictatorial actions.[1] It was, in fact, a shrewd plot to get rid of the Army Chief so as to make way for a purge of the junior officers. The three conservative colonels succeeded in convincing Phaya Phahon that they should all resign in order to make possible a genuine democracy. They offered to give up their posts if Phaya Phahon would do likewise.[2] Idealistic Phaya Phahon readily agreed, and the four of them offered their resignations to the king. King Prachathipok, well informed of the plan,[3] promptly accepted their resignations. He immediately appointed in Phaya Phahon's place a retired general who was not a Promoter.[4] Colonel Sri Sitthi Songkhram, another royalist, was made Army Chief of Staff. He was assigned the task of purging the Phibun Songkhram faction.[5]

---

1. Thompson, p. 76; Vella, p. 369.
2. Prasangsit, p. 286.
3. Saowarak, pp. 240-241.
4. Chula Chakrabongse, p. 319.
5. Saowarak, pp. 244-260.

Phaya Phahon's departure caused great alarm among the young officers. Phibun was informed of the plot[1] and was urged by his colleagues to take immediate action. He rushed to Phahon's residence and asked the colonel to lead another coup d'etat. With Colonel Phahon's consent, young Phibun and his friends deployed their tanks and artillery for the second time. A polite letter signed by Phahon and Phibun was sent to the Prime Minister ordering him to resign:

Parusakawan Palace,
Military Section,

20 June, 1933.

To Phaya Manopakorn Nitithada, the Prime Minister:

A committee composed of the Army, the Navy, and the Civilian has considered and reached a unanimous opinion that almost a year has passed since the Promoters made the revolution in Siam and during which time the Cabinet under Your Excellency's leadership has done much to advance the country in a just and beneficial direction. This, to some extent, has fulfilled the aims of those who risked their lives for the progress of the nation. However, there are other matters under the present administration which are not in accordance with the desire of the public and the committee composed of the Army, the Navy, and the Civilian. After having considered all the matters objectively, it is clear (to us) that the conduct of the present government will definitely lead our beloved country to an eventual catastrophe.

Therefore, for the sake of freedom and peace in the country, the Army, the Navy, and the Civilian wish to request Your Excellency and other members of the Council of Ministers to tender resignations, and ask Your Excellency, as Prime Minister, to bring this message to the attention of His Majesty the King, so as to

---

1. Someone had broken into the safe of the Army Chief of Staff where the plan to purge Phibun and his followers was kept, ibid., p. 260.

> reconvene the National Assembly and appoint a new Government. If this request is not carried out due to any obstacles, the Army, the Navy, and the Civilian shall appoint Colonel Phaya Phonphayuhasena, to administer the government in the name of the Protector of the Kingdom.
>
> Most respectfully yours,
> Colonel Phaya Phahon Phonphayuhasena
> Lt. Colonel Luang Phibun Songkhram [1]

The second coup d'etat which took place on the night of 19 June, 1933 was a bloodless affair. It was peaceful because of the Prime Minister's decision to yield to the military. Phaya Mano made it convenient for the coup leaders despite an advanced warning of his Police Chief.[2]

The second episode was conducted quite similarly to the first. A primary difference was the lack of active participation by the civilians whose leader, Pridi, was in exile. This was significant for thus the military could rightly claim all the credit. Having no desire to repeat the previous mistake, Phaya Phahon accepted the prime ministership while admitting his lack of experience in government.[3] Two leaders of the coup, Phibun and Suphachalasai, emerged as the most powerful figures behind Phahon. The three senior Promoters, Colonels Song, Ritthi, and Prasart, were dropped from their Cabinet posts. It was the young officers who occupied the front row in Siam's political arena.

---

1. Chot Hatsabamroe and Pricha Samakkhitham, 35 Pi haeng yuk prachathipatai (Thirty-Five Years of Democratic Era), Mitjaroen Press, Bangkok, 1968, pp. 31-33, translated by the writer.

2. Ibid., pp. 264-266.

3. Ibid., p. 38.

The military displayed impressive political skill and tact. It promptly responded to public opinion while not allowing it to get out of control. The National Assembley was reconvened two days after the coup. The officers restored the confidence of the business sector by assuring it of their intent to maintain the existing foreign and fiscal policies.[1] While planning to recall Pridi, the government declared that it was anti-Communist, and stated that Pridi would be allowed to return only after he had been cleared of Communist accusations. A committee of Thai and foreign "experts" was set up to investigate Pridi. Headed by the liberal Prince Wan Waithayakorn, the committee cleared him of the charges. Pridi was subsequently appointed Interior Minister. To prove that it was for democracy the government promised the first general election. Though there was an inevitable purge in the armed forces, it was a moderate affair. Uncertain of its position, the Phahon government avoided antagonising the king. In spite of King Prachathipok's questionable role during the Phaya Mano regime, the coup leaders confirmed their loyalty to the monarch, an act which showed their understanding of political realism and the mood of the masses. They nevertheless demonstrated a willingness to suppress any move considered a threat to their power. For instance, when a plot to overthrow the government was alleged to have been made, a stern warning was sent to all suspects. Yet the regime did not panic into launching a repressive measure.

---

1. Thompson, p. 77.

However, royalists in the armed forces were not willing to compromise with the new government. On 12 October, 1933 troops from the provincial cities of Korat and Nakhorn-Sawan marched on the capital. They were led by Prince Boworadet, the ex-Defence Minister, and Colonel Phaya Sri Sitthi Songkhram, the ousted Army Chief of Staff. Upon reaching the suburbs of Bangkok, the rebels sent an ultimatum accusing the government of violating the constitution and demanded its resignation. They ordered the government to restore the "constitutional rights" of the king, and to remove all military men from political offices.[1] Despite the attempt to project themselves as the defender of democracy, the rebels appeared a royalist force.[2] The Phaya Phahon government seemed doomed. The situation became even worse when the main body of the Air Force sided with the prince. The Navy refused to assist the government and declared its loyalty to the king.[3] Rama VII, however, dissassociated himself from the rebellion and fled to the south of Siam, fearing that he would be taken hostage by one side or the other.[4] The rebels suffered from

---

1. Thai Noi, Kor narork klang thale chalam (The Devil's Island), Phrae Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1963, p. 235.
2. Prince Chula Chakrabongse comments on this point that "Contrary to the general belief, the former Defence Minister, Prince Boworadet, joined in the plot later, and his princely rank made it a full-fledged royalist plot which was not to its advantage," Chula Chakrabongse, p. 320.
3. Thai Noi, Devil's Island, pp. 271-272.
4. Thai Noi, Eleven Premiers, pp. 47-48.

over-confidence. They expected the government to surrender at the mere sight of overwhelming force. They speculated that troops in Bangkok would rebel against the regime and that the Navy would join them in earnest. The Boworadet armies were thus ill-prepared for a major battle.[1] When the government troops under Phibun's command struck with heavy artillery (Phibun's expertise), the royalist forces rapidly collapsed. Despite its initial victory, however, the Phahon government was prepared to compromise with the rebels.[2] Prince Boworadet was unaware of this. Unwilling to witness further bloodshed, the prince pronounced his own defeat by fleeing to Indochina. His Chief of Staff, Phaya Sri Sitthi Songkhram, was killed in action.

There were various reasons for the revolt. First, royalist sympathisers in the bureaucracy and armed forces regarded the Promoters as a threat to the Royal Family. They viewed some radical Promoters as enemies to Siam's traditions.[3] They feared that the kingdom would be turned into a republic.[4] Pridi's return

---

1. Saowarak, p. 359.
2. It is later disclosed that Jao Phraya Phichaiyat, President of the Assembly, was appointed government amissary to request King Prachathipok's mediation. He was scheduled to leave for the palace at 5 a.m. of 15 October, 1933. Approximately two hours earlier, Prince Boworadet began to retreat. Had he remained firm for few more hours subsequent events would have turned out differently, ibid., pp. 381-389.
3. Saowarak, pp. 303-304.
4. This speculation first originated from the pamphlets distributed by the Promoters on the eve of the revolution threatening to set up a republican government should the king refuse to co-operate. The same message was broadcast several times before being withdrawn.

undoubtedly intensified their antagonism. Secondly, they feared that Phaya Phahon might eventually yield to the civilians' pressure, thus adopting Pridi's Economic Plan or other socialistic measures. Since most of the royalty and high ranking bureaucrats had considerable assets in lands and property, it would mean a decisive blow to their slowly deteriorating powers. Hence many princes financed the revolt. Several princes led the troops in person. General Sri Sitthi Songkhram, Boworadet's Chief of Staff, for example, was related to the Royal Family.[1] As a matter of fact, it was even alleged that the king himself was involved in the plot. He was believed to have known of the impending royalist counter-coup[2] and have prepared himself for such emergency.[3] More seriously, King Prachathipok was alleged to have financed the Boworadet coup:

> Before the Rebellion of B.E. 2476 (1933) the Prince of Chainat, Prince Nirachorn and Prince Boworadet went to visit King Prachathipok at Hua Hin...Prior to the visit, Prince Boworadet had had many correspondents with Prince Wibun Sawatwong (the King's Secretary) and King Prachathipok. In view of the financial account of the Crown Property, the king gave the sum of 200,000 Baht to Prince Borowadet. It is believed that this money was to finance the Rebellion.
>
> On 11 October, 1933 the Rebellion occurred and the Special Court was instituted to bring the defendants to trial. It was the Court's verdict that Prince Boworadet was a leader of the Rebellion and that the motive was to abolish the constitutional form of government and to return the power to King Prachathipok. 4

---

1. His personal name was M.R.I. Nophawong. M.R. stands for Mom Rachawong, a princely rank of medium level.

2. Khathadam, p. 203.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp. 203-204, citing The Affidavit of the Court of Criminal Case, dated 20 November, 1939, Bangkok, translated by the writer.

Finally, the revolution and the coup that followed did little to upset the bureaucratic power structure and especially that of the armed forces. Though princes and some of their high ranking sympathisers were removed, most of the middle-level officers remained in their posts regardless of allegiance. This was even more true in the case of the provincial administrators who were hardly affected by the two coups. Political change and relocation of power were largely confined to the Bangkok circle. There was a large gulf in political outlook and sophistication between the metropolitans and those in the provinces. The rural bureaucrats and officers, due to their lack of information, did not understand the political turmoil brewing in the capital. They viewed the change as a threat to the monarch whom they traditionally revered. Their conservatism was quickly exploited by the princes and some ambitious high ranking officers.[1]

III. Consolidation of Power

The royalists' defeat represented a personal triumph for Phibun and the young officers. It was made possible by Premier Phahon's popularity among the Prajinburi troops which prevented

---

1. It was alleged that two senior Promoters, Song and Prasart, learnt of the counter-coup but failed to inform the government. On the eve of the revolt, Premier Phahon requested Colonel Song, then at Colombo, to return in aid of the government. But Colonel Song refused. Song's trip to Ceylon was believed to have been part of his collaboration with the Royalists. In this way he was not obliged to assist the Promoters, using his absence as an excuse. Ibid., pp. 202-203.

their Petchaburi counterparts from attacking the capital from the South.[1] Although it demonstrated the superiority of the Bangkok garrison, it also revealed the vulnerability of the regime. The time had come for a thorough shake-up of the whole power structure. For this purpose the revolt proved to be exceedingly useful, as John Coast put it: "It cleared the air and permitted the coup Party to discover at last who were their potential enemies and who were really on their side; and it also gave them the excuse to imprison, justly or unjustly, all elements in whom they saw political menace."[2] Furthermore, the government deemed it necessary to correct the Navy's allegiance manifested by its neutrality during the revolt. As a consequence, twenty-three naval officers were compulsorily retired. In addition to purges and the realignment of power, the military moved to strengthen its popularity. The National Assembly was reopened and the king was invited to preside.[3] To please the public, the first general election was held in November and seventy-eight persons were elected to the Assembly (the military chose an equal number of its men, forty-nine of whom were officers, to the "second category" of the Assembly). Mass media was utilised to uplift the government's

---

1. Thompson, p. 78.
2. Coast, p. 7.
3. Again, this was done despite strong suspicion about the monarch's attitude during the revolt. King Prachathipok's "Neutral" policy was deeply resented by many people who felt that he should have given strong support to the government.

image and to win the people's support. In the attempt to close the information gap which had become apparent, public lectures, speeches and "political education" of various kinds were introduced in the provinces as well as in Bangkok. As an example, a radio lecture at the time went as follows:

> Siam is the home of the Thais. Siam would disappear if the Thais disappear. Therefore if you are a Thai you must love Siam like your home, or even more. Just as you watch over your house, must you love your country for the same reason. The difference being the country's enemies are more formidable in scope and scale. Their unscrupulous designs are too numerous and complicated to explain. If you do not keep alert or fail to understand their tricks, they might succeed in creating danger among us. The enemies will try to instigate and lead you to false thinking, and then exploit you. At present, there are persons who represent you in political matters. Therefore, if anyone criticises the government, you should inform your Tambon (commune) or province representatives. Do not rush to believe (in the accusations) because this will falsely make you lose your faith. This will endanger the country, the home of your fellow-countrymen. 1

Successive coups and counter-coups inevitably reduced the size of the ruling group. Of approximately sixty original Promoters, only thirty-one remained in the Assembly in 1938. However, none of these ex-Promoters were harmed by the victorious party. The reason for this is thought to be the oath taken prior to the revolution. Colonel Ritthi was retained in the Army despite his past "mistake." Colonel Song was allowed to retire quietly. And Colonel Prasart was sent to Germany as head of the diplomatic staff. The man who emerged on top was Phibun who proved to be the "strong man" of the

---

1. S. Khonpricha, p. 837, translated by the writer.

regime. At the age of thirty-four he became the youngest Defence Minister in the history of Thailand.

Despite several attempts to dislodge the government by force, the period between 1933-1938 was highly beneficial to Thailand. Under the leadership of Phaya Phahon, remarkable progress was achieved. While Phibun took upon himself the task of suppressing the dissident groups, Pridi became the chief architect of the national development. The civil service and legal systems were brought up-to-date. A modern civil administration was adopted. Primary education became compulsory throughout the country. Pridi also founded Thammasat University of which he became rector. He successfully concluded new treaties with America , Britain, France, Germany, and Italy in which Western extra-territorial privileges were abolished. Under the leadership of the military, Siam entered a new era in international relations, a genuine independent nation.

These rapid achievements became Phibun's argument for a strong army. He argued that Siam would advance as it progressed militarily. Phibun even went so far as to propagate the advantages of a dictatorship.[1] But the Prime Minister possessed a different outlook and temperament. Owing to Phahon's moderation, the government was not viewed as a military dictatorship. It was even considered somewhat democratic by Western observers.[2]

---

1. Thompson, p. 92.

2. Crosby, p. 82.

In March, 1934, King Prachathipok announced his abdication. Among his many reasons was the interference of the armed forces in politics. Part of the royal message to the Prime Minister reads as follows:

> After the seizure of power by Phaya Phahon Phonphayuhasena and party on 24 June, 1932, I was invited to reign as constitutional monarch. I accepted that invitation because I thought that the Promoters would establish in our country a democracy similar to those in other democratic nations, so as to enable the people to exercise the rights in governing the country for their own benefit. Since I had been in favour of such system and had been considering such change myself...I have tried to assist the government in the hope of making this great transition as peacefully and smoothly as possible. But my attempts were fruitless. The Promoters did not make any effort in creating a genuine democracy in the land. In view of the two constitutions it is clear that all powers of the government are solely in the hands of the Promoters and their supporters...
>
> I feel that the government and its supporters have not abided by the principles of individual freedoms and of justice which I believe and adhere to. I, therefore, can no longer allow my name to be used by any person pr party who administers the country in such manner.
>
> I gladly relinquish my authority to the people but cannot give my power to a group of persons who has no regard for the true voice of the people...
>
> In addition, I do not wish anyone to create disturbance in the nation on my behalf. If such incident should occur, let it be known that it does not have my approval or support.
>
> I regret that I can no longer serve the people and the country as intended by our ancestors. I pray for the progress of the nation and for the happiness of the Siamese people.
>
> Prachathipok, P.P.R.,
> 2 March, 1934,
> 1:45 P.M. [1]

1. King Prachathipok, Phra ratchahatlekha song sala ratchasombat (Letter Announcing Royal Abdication), March, 1934, translated by the writer.

The king's abdication marked the end of the monarchy in the power struggle.[1] It cleared Siam's political arena for another round of contests, this time between the young Promoters themselves. Colonel Phahon became the only person who was able to maintain the uneasy balance between Phibun and Pridi, the military and the civilians. The military faction, however, appeared to have attained an overwhelming edge in the race. The defence establishment was rapidly expanded both in size and activities. During Phibun's tenure as Defence Minister, the national budget for the armed forces doubled. Military men were appointed to various posts formerly held by civilians, such as Minister of Education and govérnors of the provinces. The armed forces, especially the Army, became a vested interest.[2] At the top of the military hierarchy was the young, good looking and ambitious Defence Chief, who, in the words of David Wilson, "constructed a solid constituency in the army."[3]

However, the civilians' leader was no less popular and powerful politically. Pridi's base of power rested upon his achievements, the Assembly, and the bureaucracy. He could also count on support from the Navy which was the Army's traditional rival. The inevitable

---

1. Upon King Prachathipok's advice the Promoters chose Prince Ananthamahidon, a youth at school in Switzerland, to be King Rama VIII. The new monarch continued to study in Switzerland while a Council of Regents was appointed to act on his behalf.

2. Coast, p. 7.

3. Wilson, The Military, p. 260.

contest for power between the two Promoters came in late 1938 when, after his disagreement with the Assembly, Premier Phahon tendered his resignation on the grounds of ill-health. A new Prime Minister had to be chosen. Before a decision was made the Defence Minister announced that a nation-wide "civil defence exercise against air attack" was to be held. A comprehensive military manoeuvre was launched. Modern weapons (aircraft, tanks, and artillery) were brought out for all to see. It was one of the most dramatic shows of force ever undertaken in Siam. Everyone was impressed.[1] It portrayed Phibun as an able and experienced Minister. On the other hand, the well-timed exhibition served as a reminder of his powerful position. It was shrewdly designed to impress the populace and to frighten his opponents. Cleverly, it was an unspoken threat.[2] Aware of Phibun's power, the Assembly appointed him Prime Minister on 16 December, 1938. The decision was reached despite speculation among the foreign residents that the post would go to the more experienced Pridi who was then the Foreign Minister.[3]

Forty-four days after Colonel Phibun took office, there was a mass arrest of prominent citizens. They were charged with having "plotted a disturbance in the country aiming at the lives of leading

---

1. Jarun Kuwanon, Chiwit kantorsu khorng bukkhon samkhan (Lives of Prominent Persons), Niphon Press, Bangkok, 1953, pp. 68-71.

2. Ibid., p. 71.

3. Thai Noi, Prawat bukkhon samkhan (Personalities), Vol. II, Odeon Store Press, Bangkok, 1961, pp. 271-272.

members of the Cabinet so as to change the system of government, and to reinstall King Pokklao (Prachathipok) or the Prince of Nakhorn-Sawan to rule as king."[1] A Special Court, headed by one of Phibun's followers, was reinstituted despite the strong protest of the elected members of the Assembly.[2] As a result, fifteen officers, two civilians and one police sergeant were condemned to death. Eleven officers and seven civilians were given life imprisonment. Phaya Song Suradet, alleged to have been involved in the plot, was forced into exile. Colonel Song, who was Phibun's chief antagonist, was a popular figure among the military elite and among the Assemblymen.[3] His departure removed the Prime Minister's main rival in the Army.

During Phibun's premiership the armed forces became more demanding and aggressive. They vied against each other for, and obtained, a larger share in the administration and other financially "profitable" civil offices (i.e., departments of tariffs, immigration, etc.) Cabinet posts, such as Minister of Economic Affairs, long intended for experts, were given to officers. The budget of the Ministry of Defence rose steadily, and in 1939 it amounted to approximately one-third of the total national budget.[4] This sudden

---

1. Jarun Kuwanon, Chiwit kantorsu khorng jormphon por phibunsongkhram (The Life of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram), Aksorn Jaroenthat Press, Bangkok, 1953, p. 78.
2. Ibid., pp. 93-100.
3. Ibid., p. 75.
4. Coast, p. 15.

rise of the military was due partly to Phibun's personality and partly to the emergence of military Fascism in Europe and Japan. Unlike Colonel Phahon, who was humble and tolerant, Phibun, who became Prime Minister at the age of forty-one, was aggressive and impatient. While Phaya Phahon managed to keep a semblance of equilibrium between the civil and the military and had high regard for civilian expertise, Phibun's personal love was the military and his sense of esprit de corps seemed at times obsessive. According to John Coast: "He (Phibun) was proud of the Army, and was generous to it out of all proportion to the country's means. He never expressed his dictatorial enthusiasm in the Army as he did in dealing with civilians; the Army was respected and pampered, while civilian outsiders later found themselves ordered about as if by a sergeant-major."[1] Attempts by Pridi and elected members of the National Assembly to check the rising political power of the soldiers were of little avail.

Military men became popular figures in Thai life. Parents no longer feared to see their sons joining the services. The armed forces with its modern weaponry were a symbol of advancement and national pride. As Phibun once declared, "The mere sight of a battleship anchored in the Jao Phraya River is worth its cost."[2]

---

1. Ibid., p. 12.

2. Thompson, p. 301.

Officers who occupied numerous military and civilian posts were viewed as all-round organisation men, wealthy, powerful, and prestigious. The fighting profession became not only respectable but also desirable. It was a source of great pride to see one's son enter the military academy. No doubt, the revolution and successive coups which saw the rapid rise of men in uniform contributed to this change in the military's image. Phibun's charisma and his success in modernising the armed forces were also responsible for this state of affairs.

It is generally believed by soldiers almost everywhere that their ways of doing things are the most efficient. Officers in Thailand are not exceptions in this respect. The government of Phibun Songkhram, which came to power at the time when the Fascist regimes of Germany, Italy, and Japan were at their height, was an admirer of military methods. Nations under strong leadership backed by modern armies, similar to the previously noted countries, were viewed as the tide of the future. Crosby rightly comments that Siamese like to be in the fashion,[1] for Phibun soon became Than phunam (The Leader). His picture was shown in the theatres for the public to revere. "Chua phunam chat phon phai" ("Follow the Leader and the Country will be Safe") was the slogan of the time. A youth organisation called Yuwachon (Young Citizens), introduced in 1935, was expanded. Its members included both boys and girls. The boys

---

1. Crosby, p. 89.

were trained in the military fashion while the girls were given instruction in nursing and the like. The aim was to instill in Thai youth the spirit of nationalism. Though its idea might have been borrowed from the Fascist states, the Thai system was different. Its membership was voluntary and they numbered only about 6,000.[1] The military also launched a campaign of economic nationalism aimed at foreigners, especially the Chinese.[2] Since most of the country's business was in the hands of foreigners, Thais were urged to enter trade and to compete. To demonstrate how things should be managed, the armed forces initiated various light industries, such as paper, sugar, and silk factories, which were to be transferred to civilian authority. A new model town was built at Lopburi. The Air Force established a pilot training school whereas the Army ran various food and garment factories to serve its own needs.[3]

Phibun Songkhram was an exponent of "strong leadership." Aside from the premiership, Phibun also held the posts of Defence and Interior Ministers, as well as Army Commander-in-Chief. The fact that he took over the Ministry of Interior, once held by Pridi, indicated his distrust of civilians. As Interior Minister, Phibun was also in command of the police force and all provincial governors

---

1. Thompson, p. 308.

2. See G. William Skinner, Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1957, pp. 261-297.

3. Thompson, p. 309.

who headed the entire rural administration. In addition, the Prime Minister appointed himself Rector of Chulalongkorn University, a post which enabled him to keep a close watch over the intellectuals and the future elite. There was little doubt that the Prime Minister was one of the most energetic leaders Siam ever had. And his numerous interests seemed genuine. His thirst for power was, however, almost limitless and the Army provided him with a solid base from which to exercise it. Phibun's determination to shape the country according to his mould, may be seen from some of his speeches. After the mass execution of 1938, he is alleged to have said: "The execution of eighteen persons is of minor significance. During the French Revolution men were guillotined by the cart loads. The execution in Siam is but a small affair."[1]

However, the regime was by no means a crude military dictatorship. Nor was its method always uncompromising. The Prime Minister carefully maintained a certain semblance of constitutionalism, and paid lip-service to the Assembly. Knowing that the civilian Promoters dreaded the royalist threat so as to justify his drastic measures. At the same time, patronage and reward were utilised to win loyalty and co-operation. In 1939, Assemblymen were given a salary increase, after they had passed all the bills introduced by the government. In 1941, eight thousand decorations were distributed. Many young civilians who had never

---

1. Jarun, Field Marshal Phibun, p. 107, translated by the writer.

held high offices were given Cabinet ranks, thereby securing for the military the loyalty of men formerly belonging to the civilian faction.[1] In so doing and by handing out patronage in other ways, the Prime Minister was able to obtain wide co-operation without having to resort to force. With regard to the public, Phibun never failed to convince them that Thailand was a democratic state. In June, 1940, at a ceremony inaugurating a monument of democracy, the Prime Minister declared:

> We have constructed this monumnet to commemorate the birth of constitutionalism in Thailand. As you know, our Constitution is the result of popular demand. It enables us to make possible progress in all aspects of our national life. We have thus recognised the 24th of June as the National Day for it has given new spirit to the country. It has put our country in the same rank as other civilised nations.
>
> It is vitally important for an advanced nation to have a constitution. This is because national progress must depend upon the attention and scrutiny of the majority. The fact that works in various fields are expanded both in scope and scale in order to satisfy our people, it is necessary that everyone in our country must contribute to these endeavours according to their duties under the constitution. 2

Perhaps the rise of military nationalism in Thailand can be partly explained by the deteriorating world situation. The Thai military leaders were among those who strongly sensed the coming of the second great crisis. The Thai government thus continued its

---

1. Crosby, p. 88.

2. Government of Thailand, Department of Public Relations, Kham prasai khorng nayokratthamontri nai kan poet anusawari prachathipatai (The Prime Minister's Speech on National Day 1940), June, 1940, translated by the writer.

arms build-up at a rapid rate. By 1937, two cruisers, nine destroyers and eight torpedo boats, were added to the Navy. A new garrison big enough to house three thousand men was constructed, along with a new naval base. Acommodation for two hundred new aircraft was hurriedly built.[1] These armament programmes involved the construction of roads, bridges, supply lines, and numerous supporting enterprises. Under the military leadership, Thailand was rapidly transformed into a modern state. The awareness of danger stimulated a sense of urgency and the need to excel. The public was advised, coerced, and even compelled to adopt a more progressive outlook. Modernity was the ultimate goal of the regime with nationalism undoubtedly giving the driving impetus. Whatever the virtue of the means employed may have seemed, the Thai military could rightly claim credit for this enthusiastic surge. As a visitor at the time said, "For better or worse, Thailand has moved faster and farther toward modernisation in the past nine years than at any similar period in its history."[2]

Such was the situation in Thailand at the outbreak of the Second World War.

---

1. Thompson, p. 303.

2. The Chicago Daily News, 14 March, 1941.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MILITARY IN WORLD WAR II

I. Failure of a Diplomacy

Colonel Phibun Songkhram was chosen as Prime Minister in 1938, instead of the popular and able Dr. Pridi Phanomyong. This was justified on the grounds that Phibun was the most suitable man if war came in the Pacific. All were reminded that Phibun was an experienced soldier whose military genius was clearly demonstrated during the two great coups of 1932 and 1933, and by the suppression of the royalist revolt. A man of charismatic personality, he was considered a leader ideally suited for war-time statesmanship.[1]

The Phibun military-bureaucratic government moved swiftly to consolidate its position internally as well as to prepare Thailand militarily for war. By 1941, according to a British intelligence report, the Thai Army had a strength of about 20,000 men, with approximately 160,000 more in the primary reserve.[2] It is said that "the Ministry of Defence was in a position to put something like 100,000 men into the field, but not more than about 80,000 of these would have been adequately equipped, or officered."[3] The Royal

---

1. Withet Korani, Chiwit lae kantorsu khorng hasib ratthamontri (Lives of Fifty Ministers), P.A.N. Press, Bangkok, 1963, pp. 140-141.
2. The Foreign Office and Ministry of Economic Warfare, Siam Basic Handbook, London, 1945, p. 54.
3. Ibid.

Thai Navy consisted if about 4,000 men and its military hardware was considered "more or less up-to-date."[1] "The Thai Navy," it said, "was made up of a 'gunboat flotilla' of 4 vessels, a 'sloop group' of 3 vessels, a 'destroyer group' consisting of one old vessel purchased many years ago in England, a 'torpedo boat flotilla' of 9 vessels, a 'small torpedo boat group' of 3 old vessels, a 'submarine flotilla' of 4 vessels, a 'mine-layer flotilla' of 2 vessels, a 'transport flotilla' of 8 small vessels and a 'seaplane squadron' consisting of a very small number of aircraft. There were also a 'torpedo craft flotilla' and a 'coastal motor boat group.' The gunboats and sloops were composed mostly of new ships ordered from Japan; the submarines were also new and likewise came from Japan; whilst the 'torpedo boat group' of 9 ships was made of units newly supplied from Italy."[2] The Royal Thai Air Force is reported to have comprised 2,000 men. The number of its aircraft is not disclosed but it included "a number of bombers." The Royal Thai Air Force is said to be "the most efficient of the country's Fighting Services."[3] Besides the airfields at Don Muang (fourteen miles from Bangkok), Nakhorn Ratchasima, Kok Kathiam, and Prajuab Khirikhan, there were also a large number of landing fields "scattered elsewhere throughout the Kingdom."[4] In addition, the Air Force administered a Flying Training School at Don Muang and an Aircraft Factory at Bangsue where

---

1. Ibid., p. 55.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 56.
4. Ibid.

it produced machines under the licences of Vought Corsair, Curtis Hawk, Avro, and North American companies. All of the engines, however, had to be imported.[1]

Thailand's armament policy undoubtedly alarmed many observers. The increasing amount of war material, purchased largely from Japan and Italy, was interpreted as a "drastic change in the...policies of the government, which hitherto has leaned strongly toward friendship with and reliance on Britain."[2] Others saw it as a possible threat to her neighbours and feared that Thailand would join with Japan in the conquest of South and Southeast Asia:

> Siam is undoubtedly rearming. Her only neighbours are French and British territories. If she means them no harm, why is she enlarging her army, why building submarines, and what about those new gunboats from Italy? Quite recently a map was semi-officially published showing Siam Irredenta, those Cambodian districts including Angkor and some Siamese speaking lands, that she ceded to France about 30 years ago, and the four Malay sultanates whose suzerainty she soon afterwards gave over to Britain. Over it all looms the shadow of Japan. In Malaya and still more in French Indo-China lurid tales are told of the growth of Japanese influence in Siam. Excited Frenchmen see visions of Japan and Siam holding hands across the narrow waist of Annam. British and American journalists still sometimes talk of the Japanese made canal across the Kra Peninsula, by-passing Singapore, through which Japanese hordes will pour out upon the shores of India.[3]

The Thais, however, denied any aggressive designs. Before relinquishing his post in late 1938, Premier Phaya Phahon announced

---

1. Ibid.
2. The New York Times, 17 December, 1938.
3. The Times, 21 January, 1939.

that the Thai armed build-up was aimed "just enough to protect our own borders."[1] Its stated purpose was to preserve national independence and integrity which to all Thais was of the utmost importance. "We consider freedom our greatest national treasure. Our foreign policy, as well as internal government, is directed toward maintaining this freedom. We are occupied with modernising our whole social and economic life to keep pace with the world...we have no intention of becoming a totalitarian state. If we can profitably work and utilise all the land that we have now, and can earn the right to be called 'The Land of the Free in Asia,' we feel that we shall be a happy nation."[2]

Although a military man by profession and training, Prime Minister Phibun was by no means ignorant in matters of foreign relations. Despite his devotion to the Army, Phibun was not blind to the fact that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Thailand had survived as a free nation not by military strength but by an understanding of power politics and a diplomacy of realism. The undogmatic and flexible approach underlying traditional Siamese foreign policy enabled her to maintain a large measure of sovereignty, although at times portions of her autonomy or territory had to be sacrificed as the price of compromise. Direct confrontation with the major power had to be avoided at all costs. Thus since his assumption of power, Phibun worked energetically and patiently to establish Thailand as a friend of all nations. In the words of the young Prime Minister,

---

1. The New York Times, 18 September, 1938.

2. Ibid.

"our policy is friendly neutrality."[1]

At the same time, however, Phibun felt that to preserve her neutrality a strong modern Thai army had to be maintained. In his radio speech in 1937, Phibun foresaw the possibility of a second world war with Germany, Italy, and Japan on the one side, and Britain, France, and the Soviet Union on the other.[2] In such a conflict, he said, "Japan would attack Britain's great Singapore base, in which event Siam would be awkwardly placed and must be armed to defend her neutrality."[3] This defensive neutrality was by no means a concept restricted to the Phibun Songkhram government. Kings Chulalongkorn, Vajiravudh, and Prachathipok had sought to strengthen the Thai defence capability while pursuing a correct, if not always cordial, relationship with the major powers. As a Thai intellectual explained: "With these necessary forces, created and maintained at a sacrifice, we hope to be able to maintain our neutrality. We have no illusion that our forces are sufficient to withstand a great Power which is determined to subdue us, but we mean to make it as expensive for her as possible."[4]

With the genuine hope of excluding Thailand from the conflict of international dimensions, Phibun undertook to cultivate the

---

1. The Sunday Times, 11 June, 1939.
2. The New York Times, 17 December, 1938.
3. Ibid.
4. The Sunday Times, 11 June, 1939.

goodwill of big allies, particularly Britain and Japan. Great Britain was an old power in the area and her intercourse with Thailand was, by and large, cordial and especially so since the reign of King Chulalongkorn, an admirer of things English.[1] Anglo-Thai close friendship was kept alive by the British-educated Kings Vajiravudh and Prachathipok. Japan, on the other hand, was a new force in Asia which in 1940 replaced France in Indochina. Understandably, the emergence of Japan's power in the area was welcomed by the Thai government which was fearful of any single power achieving hegemony in Southeast Asia. Thai leaders were thus compelled to play off Britain and Japan, as they had previously, and to a large extent satisfactorily kept a balance between Britain and France. This practice suited traditional Siamese foreign policy by enabling her to maintain maximum choice and mobility. Calling it "neutrality" (Khwampen klang), the Phibun Songkhram government saw it as ideal tactic for assuring the country continued peace and independence.

In 1939, the Thai government made a major move to strengthen its non-involvement diplomacy. It attempted to conclude a non-aggression treaty with the three major powers in Southeast Asia:

---

1. However, the king did not let his personal sentiment overshadow his practical politics. While the Crown Prince, Wachirunahit, was educated in the Siamese manner, other princes were sent to study in most of the major countries of Europe: Britain, Germany, Russia, and Denmark. Britain, nevertheless, continued to receive the largest number of Thai students until the end of the second world war whereby the United States became the prime interest of the Thais.

Britain, France, and Japan. In late 1939, before the outbreak of war in Europe, the Thai and French governments deemed it necessary to come to a mutual agreement regarding the Mekong River boundary. In October, the two parties agreed to conclude a non-aggression treaty in addition to settling the Mekong problem. To eliminate any possible suspicions on the part of the other powers and to confirm its neutral position, the government of Phibun Songkhram decided to invite Britain and Japan to make a similar treaty with Thailand.[1] The Thai invitation was received with favourable response from Britain which in 1940 agreed to conclude the non-aggression treaty. Japan, however, was reluctant. The Japanese Ambassador to Thailand told the Thai Foreign Minister, Mr. Direk Chaiyanam, that "he did not see significant advantage in making such treaty because our two countries did not share any mutual boundary."[2] Nonetheless, Japan eventually consented to the idea but asked the privilege of concluding the treaty ahead of the two powers, Britain and France. The Thai Foreign Minister describes the Japanese move as follows:

> On 22 April, 1940...the Japanese Ambassador called on me. He said that the Japanese government agreed to conclude the non-aggression treaty (with Thailand). The reason for the Japanese reluctance, he said, was because it feared the action might lead to international misunderstanding, particularly among the Axis. Besides, Japan had never before made such treaty with any party; Thailand would be the first country to do so...The Japanese Ambassador

---

1. Direk Chaiyanam, Thai kab songkhramlok khrang thi sorng (Thailand and World War II), Vol.I, Phrae Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1967, p. 43.

2. Ibid., p. 44.

> asked to see the Prime Minister in order to inform him that if Britain concluded her treaty with Thailand ahead of Japan, the Japanese people might accuse the Thais of making a deal with the British. He thus suggested us to delay signing the treaty with Britain for two or three weeks in order to let Japan finish her agreement with Thailand first. If this was not possible, he said, both treaties must be signed on the same day.1

This complicated diplomatic manoeuvre finally resulted in the simultaneous conclusions of the non-aggression treaties between Thailand and the three powers (seperately) on 12 June, 1940. Though the Japan-Thai treaty was slightly different from the Anglo-Thai, and Franco-Thai version[2] (the latters were identical), it was similar in most respects. The Japan-Thai "treaty concerning the continuance of friendly relations and mutual respect of each other's territorial integrity" reads as follows:

> Article 1. The High Contracting Parties shall mutually respect each other's territorial integrity and hereby reaffirm the constant peace and the perpetual friendship existing between them.
>
> Article 2. The High Contracting Parties shall mutually maintain friendly contact in order to exchange information, and to consult one another, on any question of common interest that may arise.
>
> Article 3. In the event of one of the High Contracting Parties suffering an attack from any Third Power or Powers, the other Party undertakes not to give aid or assistance to the said Power or Powers against Party attacked.
>
> Article 4. The present treaty shall be ratified and the ratifications thereof shall be exchanged at Bangkok, as soon as possible.

---

1. Ibid., p. 46, translated by the writer.

2. This was the result of Japan's insistance that she did not wish to make a treaty exactly identical to those with Britain and France.

> Article 5. The present treaty shall come into effect on the date of exchange of ratifications and shall remain in force for five years from that date.
>
> In case neither of the High Contracting Parties shall have given notice to the other six months before the expiration of the said period of five years of its intention to terminate the treaty, it shall continue operative until the expiration of one year from the date on which either Party shall have given such notice.1

The Phibun Songkhram government tried its best to demonstrate Thailand's neutrality. During its negotiations of non-aggression treaties with Britain, France, and Japan, the German, Italian, and American envoys in Thailand were kept fully informed of the necessary details.[2] Many critics have neverthless argued that the Thai military government had a pro-Japanese outlook with a similar philosophy to that of the Axis states; and that its alliance with Japan was a deliberate design to make Thailand powerful in Southeast Asia.[3] These critics have pointed to the fact that as early as 1933 at the League of Nations, Thailand took a first step to accommodate Japan by failing to censure it for its aggression in Manchuria. Since that point, they said, trade and other relations between the two countries grew steadily. There were frequent exchanges of visitors, journalists, businessmen, as well as of formal goodwill missions. A large number of Thai students were sent to study in Japan. There was the famous news of the Thai plan to

---

1. S. Shepard Jones and Denys P. Myers, Documents on American Foreign Relations, Vol. III, July 1940-June 1941, World Peace Foundation, Boston, 1941, p. 268.

2. Direk, p.45.

3. Donald E. Nuechterlein, Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asai, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1965, p. 75.

construct the canal across the Isthmus of Kra in the North of Malaya, which would surely reduce the importance of British Singapore and Hong Kong, and would seriously undermine the British economic and military power in Southeast Asia. There was also a speculation that the British Financial Advisor to Thailand was to be replaced by a Japanese. These all pointed to the closer co-operation between the two independent Asian countries,[1] which was seen as a Thai tactic to use Japan to advance her own interest in Indochina, Burma, and Malaya at the expense of France and Britain.[2] This suspicion was again confirmed when hostilities broke out between France and Thailand in 1940, and the United States cancelled delivery of ten bombers which had already been paid for by the Thais; Japan swiftly agreed to furnish Thailand with the same number of its planes, together with Japanese technicians to assist in their maintenance.[3] The height of Japan-Thai collaboration before the war may be said to have been reached when Japan became an arbiter in the Franco-Thai conflict over disputed territories in Indochina. Thailand was awarded a portion of Laos and Cambodia. The result of this arbitration was, understandably, the popularity of Japan among the Thai public.

The critics, however, overlook the fact that Japan was a newly emerging power in the area predominantly and historically dominated by Britain, France, and the Netherlands. Thus, the increase of Japan's influence in Thailand was in part due to the latter's recognition of

---

1. Virginia Thompson, Thailand: The New Siam, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1941, pp. 123-137.
2. Nuechterlein, p. 68.
3. Ibid., p. 69.

Japan's growing power and the attempt to adjust Thailand's position to suit the new reality. As a sympathetic observer at the time put it:

> Certainly Japan is deeply interested in Siam and is spending money there freely, particularly on the native Press. And certainly Siam cannot afford to ignore Japan. She must make certain calculations. If Japan is to become the dominant Power in Southeastern Asia, if the Japanese are to be able with impunity to attack next the colonies of Britain, France, or Holland, then clearly Siam cannot afford to range herself in an opposite camp. There are economic considerations too. The wealth of Siam comes largely from her export of rice to Southern China. If Japan is to control Southern China, Siam's markets will depend on friendship with her. Or will Japanese imperialism close the market, since Japan has her own rice to sell? Much depends on the outcome of the Chinese venture. 1

The fact remains that Japan did not enjoy any privileges in Thailand. As regards the expansion of Thailand's trade with her, it was not a direct product of the Phibun government; the Japan-Thai commercial interest had been in progress since the time of King Vajiravudh (1910-1925). Even at the height of their cordiality, trade with Japan never exceeded that of Britain. British advisors, moreover, continued to outnumber the Danes, the Germans, the French, and the Americans in the Thai ministries. In fact there was only one Japanese advisor in Thailand and he held an insignificant position. And while there were approximately two hundred Thai students in Japan in the late 1930's, there were also large numbers of Thai students in the Philippines, Britain, America, and Continental Europe.[2] This was a result of the traditional Siamese educational

---

1. The Times, 21 January, 1939.

2. In 1930, there were approximately 200 Thai students in England, 50 in the United States, 25 in the Philipinnes, 40 in France, and few others in Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and Denmark, Baron de Lapomarede, "The Setting of the Siamese Revolution", Pacific Affairs, Vol. 7, No.3, September, 1934, p. 252.

policy of sending its youth to as many foreign countries as possible, avoiding the excessive influence of any particular doctrine.[1] As a matter of fact, the Phibun government was rather obsessed with the idea of maintaining the image of a strict neutrality. In 1940, for example, when a group of Thai delegates was sent to Japan on a goodwill tour, a parallel mission was soon dispatched to British Malaya, Burma, India, and even to Australia. When Prince Chichibu of Japan was decorated, and received the Royal Family Order of Chakkri, the Thai government conferred upon the Duke of Gloucester the same decoration.[2] This performance made a favourable impression on the experienced Sir Josiah Crosby, the British Minister in Thailand at the time. He believed that behind the formal neutral policy lay the genuine pro-Allies sentiment among the Thai elites.[3] Crosby describes the basis of Thailand's pro-British tendency as follows:

> Though the average Siamese would unquestionably have preferred to see his country benefit by the indefinite prolongation of the balance of power in South-Eastern Asia as between Britain and Japan, I believe that, if a choice had been forced upon him and if it had been guaranteed that he could make it with safety, he would have opted in favour of a British rather than a Japanese ascendency, as being the less dangerous of the two. This selection would have been made, to put it on no higher ground, on the principle that it is more prudent to consort with the devil whom one already knows than with the devil with whom one is less familiar. And I believe that what I have just said applies to the majority of the military faction and to their leader Luang Phibun himself, no less than to most other Siamese.[4]

---

1. See David A. Wilson, "Thailand and Marxism," in Frank N. Trager (ed.) Marxism in Southeast Asia: A Study of Four Countries, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1960, p. 70.
2. Sir Josiah Crosby, Siam: The Crossroads, Hollis and Carter Limited, London, 1945, pp. 64-66.
3. Ibid., pp. 125-126.
4. Ibid., pp. 126-127.

Other observers saw Thailand as a political realist. Despite their long friendship with the West, they noted, the Thais' allegiance was to themselves. "General Songkhram (Phibun) has been charged with being pro-Japanese," stated The Christian Science Monitor, "actually General Songkhram is pro-Siamese,"[1] And because of this they were inclined to consider the Thais as shrewd opportunists. Thailand's neutrality, they claimed, was compatible with Siamese political behaviour:

> This (neutrality) was in obedience to that profound political instinct which Siamese statesmen seem to have in their very blood and which enables them to discern clearly that Siam, as a small nation, has everything to gain by maintaining as long as possible the balance of influence between her powerful neighbours and by putting herself into the pocket of none of them. After the collapse of France in 1940, it was unavoidable that French influence in Siam should have dwindled to a vanishing point, but even then, even in the days of the evacuation from Dunkirk when the defeat of the British at the hands of Germany seemed to be almost certain, the Siamese Government continued to preserve a consistently friendly attitude towards Britain and to keep the balance as between her and Japan, although Bangkok had by that time developed into something like diplomatic battleground between British and Japanese interests. The Government of Luang Pibun Songram was, in fact, determined to sit upon the fence as long as it could and not going to come down from it on one side or the other, until it had become quite convinced as to which of the two combatants was destined to be the winner, in the armed conflict which was obviously impending. 2

---

1. The Christian Science Monitor, 12 September, 1941.

2. The Foreign Office and Ministry of Economic Warfare, p. 63.

In 1940, following the conclusion of the non-aggression pacts between Thailand and the three powers, events in Southeast Asia moved at a rapid speed. On 19 June, 1940, five days after the German entry into Paris, the Japanese government demanded that the French authority in Indochina close its frontier with China. The chief purpose was to cut off Allied aid to the Chinese forces.[1] The French promptly yielded to the Japanese wish. In the middle of July, Japan demanded the right to station troops and construct air fields in Indochina. Permission was again granted by the Vichy government. On 4 September, 1940 an agreement was signed between the French and the Japanese whereby Japan was given special privileges in Indochina together with an entry of 25,000 Japanese troops into the area.[2]

The Phibun government viewed the Indochinese situation with grave concern. It began to doubt seriously the virtue of neutrality. As Japanese troops kept pouring into Indochina, Premier Phibun's worry over the vulnerability of Thailand's northeastern frontier became acute.[3] Thus the Thai government requested the French government to settle promptly their frontier problems which, despite the non-aggression treaty, had not yet been concluded because of the situation in Europe. France's reluctance to negotiate with

---

1. Direk, p. 60.

2, Ibid., pp. 62-63.

3. Ibid.

Thailand coupled with the Thais' unrealistic demand[1] led to a state of tension between the two parties.[2] Subsequently, the Thai National Assembly refused to ratify the Franco-Thai non-aggression pact. In November, 1940 hostilities broke out between French and Thai forces along the length of the Mekong River. After twenty-two days of fighting, Thai troops occupied the Laotian capital of Luang Prabang and parts of Cambodia near Angkor and Phnom Penh.[3] Japan promptly offered to settle the dispute through mediation. In January, 1941 a Thai delegation headed by Prince Wan Waithayakorn was sent to Tokyo to present the Thai case while the French Ambassador to Japan represented France in the negotiation. An agreement was reached on 9 May, 1941 whereby France returned to Thailand the Laotion provinces of Luang Prabang and Champasak, and the Cambodian provinces of Battambong, Siemrap, and Sisophon, the territories Thailand has ceded to France in 1904 and 1907.[4]

Despite the Japanese good offices and cordiality, the Thais became acutely aware of Japan's ambitious designs. The Japanese move into Indochina confirmed Phibun's early theory that Japan would invade Hong Kong, and Malaya would be attacked via Thailand.[5]

---

1. Fearing the Japanese threat, the Phibun government wanted a commitment from France that, in the event France relinquished its jurisdiction over Indochina, it would turn over the control of Laos and Cambodia to Thailand. The French, apparently hurt by the Thai frankness, insisted that there had been no change in France's eminence in Indochina. They thus refused to discuss the matter with the Thai government.
2. Direk, pp. 77-86.
3. Ibid., pp. 107-108.
4. For details of the agreement see ibid., pp. 120-122.
5. John Coast, Some Aspects of Siamese Politics, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1953, p. 17.

Immediately after the Japanese penetration of Indochina, Prime Minister Phibun made a formal protest to the Japanese Foreign Minister that Thailand would strongly resist any violation of her territory.[1] In March, 1941, after the Tokyo arbitration, Prince Wan Waithayakorn reiterated the Thai neutral position and reminded the Japanese government of its obligations under the non-aggression treaty with Thailand:

> The Government of Thailand, being constantly solicitous of the maintenance of peace of Greater East Asia, have never taken initiative of such a nature as of disturbing that peace, but testify to their fidelity to the basic spirit which inspired the treaty of June 12, 1940...On the basis of that spirit and being desirous of avoiding all kinds of engagement which will involve their country in a conflict between third Powers, the Government of Thailand hereby declare that they have no intention of entering into any agreement or understanding with a third Power or Powers envisaging political, economic or military co-operation aimed either directly or indirectly against Japan. Moreover, it is expected by the Government of Thailand that the Government of Japan will assure the strict observance of the treaty of the 12th June, 1940.[2]

While diplomacy was being utilised to the utmost, the Phibun government moved quickly to prepare Thailand for an invasion.[3] A

---

1. Ibid.

2. Documents on American Foreign Relations, p. 299, emphasis added.

3. The Prime Minister also feared the British invasion of southern Thailand to counter the Japanese war plan. As it appeared, however, he was more pre-occupied with the idea of the Japanese attack and the defence of the north-eastern frontier adjacent to Indochina.

plan to move the capital to Lopburi was prepared. The National Assembly passed a law asking all citizens to resist the attack. Various programmes were undertaken aiming at the country's self-sufficiency. The government urged its nationals to modernise and maintain a progressive outlook and alertness. Only progressive people, said Phibun, could effectively maintain their independence and dignity.[1] The Prime Minister repeatedly announced that Thailand would defend "to the death" any intrusion of her territory.[2] The following New York Times dispatch, sent three days before the Japanese attack, described Thailand's war preparedness:

> Thailand tightened up her defences today as Premier Luang Phibun Songkhram indicated he was devoting himself entirely to military affairs. It was announced that henceforth he will be known as Field Marshal Plack Phibun Songkhram and that his petition to the Regency for relinquishment of the title of Premier had been sanctioned.
>
> Though defence preparations proceeded there was much less tension in connexion with them. The Bangkok radio suspended its warnings to the people about the eminence of war and the necessity to guard against "fifth column" activities. It shifted to instructions on public duties in the crisis and emphasised the need for national self-sufficiency.3

Nevertheless, the Thais were well-aware of the fact that their small army, however modern it might have seemed, could not withstand a large-scale attack by a powerful country. In August, 1941, Phibun informed the American ambassador that Thailand would resist any invasion and formally requested American assistance. By autumn he

---

1. Direk, pp. 102-103.

2. Coast, p. 17.

3. The New York Times, 6 December, 1941.

urgently pleaded for arms and planes fr.m the United States and Britain saying that "Thailand looked to its friends, the United States and Great Britain in those difficult times."[1] In November a Thai military delegation under Colonel Luang Suranarong was sent to Singapore seeking British co-operation and aid.[2] But help was not forthcoming. On 7 December, 1941, as Japanese forces were spotted heading for the Gulf of Siam, the Thais again appealed for military assistance from their treaty ally, Great Britain.[3] A British reply finally arrived to the effect: "Can spare only few howitzers. Good Luck."[4]

Allies' assistance was not given to Thailand in time, for America and Britian had already made a secret paln to neutralise the country. It was disclosed (after the war) that in an attempt to "deter or delay a Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia," the United States government had suggested to the Japanese a scheme of neutralisation of Indochina and Thailand.[5] In 1941, President Roosevelt proposed a plan, without the knowledge of the Thais, to guarantee a "Switzerland-type" neutrality of Indochina and Thailand.[6]

---

1. Lyman M. Tondel, Jr. (ed.), The Southeast Asia Crisis: Background Papers and Proceedings of the Eighth Hammarskjold Forum, The Association of the Bar of the City of New York, New York, 1966, p. 92.

2. Coast, p. 17. Colonel Luang Suranarong was in Singapore when Japan invaded Thailand and Malaya. He later became one of the Free Thais in the British "Force 136."

3. Tondel, p. 92.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 90.

6. Ibid.

As the President envisaged, this action would be undertaken jointly by Britain, China, the Netherlands, Japan, and the United States. This would enable the Japanese "to obtain the raw materials of these areas on condition that it withdrew its armed forces in toto from Indochina and pledged no intervention in Thailand."[1] The American President is reported to have proposed the following plan to the Japanese Ambassador in Washington:

> The President stated that if the Japanese Government would refrain from occupying Indochina with its military and naval foces, or, had such steps actually been commenced, if the Japanese Government would withdraw such force, the President could assure the Japanese Government that he would do everything within his power to obtain from the Governments of China, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and of course the United States itself, a binding and solemn declaration, provided Japan would undertake the same commitment, to regard Indochina as a neutralised country in the same way in which Switzerland had up to now been regarded by the powers as a neutralised country. He stated that this would imply that none of the powers concerned would undertake any military act of aggression against Indochina and would refrain from the exercise of any military control within or over Indochina. He would further endeavour to procure from Great Britain and the other pertinent powers a guarantee that so long as the present emergency continued, the local French authorities in Indochina would remain in control of the territory and would not be confronted with attempts to dislodge them on the part of de Gaullist or Free French agents or forces...
>
> If these steps were taken, the President said, Japan would be given solemn and binding proof that no other power had any hostile designs upon the Indochina and that Japan would be afforded the fullest and freest opportunity of assuring herself of the source of food supplies and other raw materials in Indochina which she was seeking to secure...
>
> With regards to Thailand, in the judgment of the Government of the United States, there was not the remotest threat of danger to Japan nor the slightest justification

---

1. Ibid.

> for Japan alleging that she desired to obtain such concession from Thailand as a means of assuring a source of raw supplies or as a measure of military precaution. The President therefore desired the Japanese Government to know that the previous proposal which he had made to Japan with regard Indochina be regarding as embracing Thailand as well, and that should the Government of Japan accede to the proposal of the President and abandon its present course with regard to Indochina, the President would request of other powers which he had mentioned in connexion with his proposal concerning Indochina the same guarantee and measure of security with regards to Thailand.[1]

This proposal received the approval of Mr. Churchill who considered it "entirely good."[2] The Thais never knew of this action until after the event. As for the Japanese, they avoided and evaded the issue until Pearl Harbour.

II. The Decline of the Military

In the evening of 7 December, 1941 Police General Adul Aduldejarat, the Deputy Prime Minister, had a dinner engagement at the home of Mr. Direk Chaiyanam, the Foreign Minister. General Adul had recently been appointed Acting Prime Minister, following Phibun's absence from the capital. The Prime Minister was at that time on a military tour of the northeastern frontier near the Japanese-occupied Indochina. Before the dinner, Adul received an urgent telephone call; he rushed to the Government House. Half an hour later, Direk was instructed to join Adul immediately.[3]

---

1. Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan 1931-1941, Vol. II, pp. 529, 529, 540, cited in Tondel, p. 90.

2. Ibid., p. 91.

3. Direk, pp. 192-193.

At the Government House, Direk found the Japanese Ambassador and his diplomatic staff composed of the Military Attaché, the Naval Attaché, an interpreter, and a secretary, waiting to see Phibun. Since the Prime Minister was not in Bangkok, Adul asked Direk to receive the envoy. The Japanese Ambassador told the Thai Foreign Minister that Japan had declared war on America and Great Britain and asked that Japanese troops be allowed to pass through Thailand. This permission, he said, had to be granted before 2 a.m. of 8 December, 1941.[1] As Direk describes the event:

> Mr. Subokami, the Japanese Ambassador, said that today was the most important day in Japanese history... He said everyone should be well aware of the Anglo-American constant threat to Japan. Japan, he said, could endure this no longer. Now she had decided to fight and a state of war had been declared on America and Britain. He had thus been instructed by his government to request Thailand a passage of Japanese troops to attack the enemies of Japan. He had to make this formal request to me, he said, because he could not see the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister. I then told him that Thailand was a neutral country and could not give aid to any party. He said this was a matter of life and death for Japan and regardless of everything Japanese land, air and naval forces had to be granted permission to move through Thailand. I told him I could not authorise this because I was merely Foreign Minister. Only the Prime Minister, who was also the Supreme Commander, could make such a decision. And that the Ambassador was probably aware of the fact that the Prime Minister had given a standing order to resist any military aggression on Thailand. Only he (Phibun) could remove that order. The Japanese Military Attaché, Colonel Tamura, then warned me that a delay on our part would only cause bloodshed. He also said that Japanese troops had already landed at various points in Thailand. 2

---

1. Though the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour is dated 7 December whereas the invasion of Thailand and Malaya is 8 December, the events actually occurred on the same day. The difference in date is due to the fact that Hawaii and Southeast Asia lie on different sides of the International Date Line.

2. Direk, pp. 194-195, translated by the writer.

The Japanese, nonetheless, decided to wait for Phibun. An emergency Cabinet meeting was called at 1 a.m. The Prime Minister was contacted at 4 a.m. He was informed that Japanese forces had been landing in Thailand since 2 a.m. Fighting between Japanese troops and Thai resistant units had occurred at Nakhorn Sri Thamarat, Songkhla, Pattani, and Prajuab Khirikhan in southern Thailand.[1] Some Japanese marines had landed at Pak Nam near Bangkok. Others had crossed into the country via Indochina. Phibun replied he would go immediately to Lopburi, the new military headquarters, to fight the Japanese.[2] However, he was persuaded to go to the capital before taking such action. The Prime Minister arrived by plane at 6.45 a.m.

At the Cabinet meeting General Adul briefed the Prime Minister about the development of the crisis. Phibun then asked the Cabinet what action they would advise him to take. "Are we going to continue fighting," he asked, "or cease firing? Every minute a Thai must die. One of our Pattani battalions has just been wiped out."[3]

It was General Adul, the Deputy Prime Minister,[4] who offered

---

1. Ibid., p. 349.
2. Coast, p. 18.
3. Direk, p. 350, translated by the writer.
4. Adul was a decisive figure among the Promoters. He is believed to be responsible for many harsh measures taken by the Phibun government. "The Siamese have since attributed great ruthlessness to Adul," states John Coast, "and carefully pointed out that he is half-Indian." (p. 11). An interesting fact about the Phibun Cabinet is that a number of its prominent members are drawn from foreign ancestries. Besides Adul, Colonel "Goering" Prayoon Phamornmontri is half-German. Pridi is half-Chinese and Khuang is half-Cambodian.

a suggestion. According to Mr. Thawi Bunyaket, a Cabinet member and secretary of the meeting at the time, Adul is reported to have said:

> This matter must be carefully viewed from all angles. We cannot rely on any assistance now. The British will not help us for they have to help themselves. The Americans cannot help us either by sending troops or weapons because they too are under attack everywhere. The Philippines is under heavy Japanese bombardment. The Americans and British cannot help each other either. We must rely on ourselves. Now the Japanese are waiting for our answer. Are we going to compromise or not? Since they are not afraid of America and Britian, the great powers, why should they be afraid of us? Of course we have troops, but we have to fight it alone. They might blockade us and who will come to our aid? If we are defeated, we will surely become a colony - their slaves. We can also run away to form a government in exile. But as we have seen in Europe, the government in exile did not have enough authority. Besides, if we set up a government outside the country, Thailand will be under Japanese rule. Even though they might allow Thais to run the country, the Japanese will definitely control them in every way. 1

Thus Adul suggested it was better to compromise one's sovereignty than to become "a hundred per cent Japanese colony."[2] This seemed to be the only sensible alternative in the eyes of many Cabinet members. As Thawi summed up their predicament:

---

1. Thawi Bunyaket, "Khorthetjing phoemtoem khiawkab hetkan nai prathetthai samai mahasongkhramlog khrang thi sorng" (Additional Facts Regarding Events in Thailand During the Second World War), in Direk Chaiyanam, Thailand and World War II, Vol. I, Phrae Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1967, pp. 350-351, translated by the writer.

2. Ibid., p. 352.

> After a long deliberation the Prime Minister seeing that the ministers could not make up their minds, said the whole issue boiled down to whether to fight or not to fight. Everyone was faced with grave dilemmas. On the one hand, we all wanted to fight because we were furious at the Japanese violation of our sovereignty. On the other hand, we knew very well that resistance would only mean suicide. There was not a chance of winning.1

Finally, the majority of the Cabinet appeared to agree with Adul.[2] Although Pridi counselled careful consideration and warned of "world opinion,"[3] there is no record of his opposition to the idea of yielding to Japan. Relative to the thought that the Thai ruling elite was divided into the civilian (Pro-Allies) and military (Pro-Japan) factions, Phibun later stated emphatically that "the Cabinet's decision not to fight Japan was unanimous."[4] Luang Wijit Wathaken, Phibun's close associate, states in his memoirs that there was no division within the Cabinet at the time of this crisis.[5] The reason behind the consensus of the Thai leaders, liberals and conservatives alike, regarding the collaboration with Japan may be said to be as follows:

---

1. Ibid., p. 355.
2. Ibid.
3. Direk, p. 197.
4. Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram, Letter to the Editors, September, 1947, mimeograph.
5. Thai Noi, Prasopkan 34 pi haeng rabob prachathipatai (Thirty-Four Years of Democracy), Phrae Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1966, pp. 410-411.

> How otherwise, could the conduct of professed and undoubted liberals be explained? Once the decision had been taken at the top that Siam would back Japan, there were only two conceivable political alternatives: either they must appear to give full co-operation, or opposing Ministers must resign. The fact that no prominent, voluntary resignations occurred seems to indicate that the Siamese felt that they were all in the same boat; it did not mean that they all suddenly began to like the Japanese.1

Once the decision to co-operate with Japan had been reached, the Prime Minister ordered an end to all Thai resistance. He and Direk left the Cabinet room to meet the waiting Japanese Ambassador. Phibun was presented with four courses of action:

1. Thailand will join the Axis Alliance composing of Germany, Italy, and Japan, or

2. Thailand will allow the passage of Japanese troops through Thailand, co-operate and assist in such undertaking, and take necessary measures to prevent any possible clashes between Japanese and Thai forces, or

3. Thailand will sign a defensive-offensive pact with Japan, or

4. Thailand will become member of the Axis Alliance and sign a defensive-offensive pact with Japan. The two countries will join forces in the defence of Thailand.[2]

With these proposals, the Japanese promised to "respect Thailand's independence, sovereignty and honour" and to return the lost territories to Thailand.[3]

The Thais meanwhile could not agree to any of the Japanese

---

1. Coast, p. 20.

2. Jarun Kuwanon, Chiwit Kantorsu khorng jormphon por phibunsongkhram (The Life of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram), Aksorn Jaroenthat Press, Bangkok, 1953, pp. 166-171.

3. Thawi, pp. 353-354.

proposed plans. The suggestions of joining the Axis, signing a defensive-offensive treaty, or a commitment to a joint defence of Thailand were immediately rejected by the Cabinet. Mr. Pora Samahan, a minister, strongly opposed any future acceptance of the lost territories offered by Japan, on the ground that it would make Thailand appear as an opportunist. "It is immaterial," he said, "whether the lost provinces are returned to us. We must demonstrate to the world that we sign an agreement with Japan because we are forced to do so."[1] Pridi, an economist by training, was concerned with the effect of Japanese passage on the economy. He feared that Japan would subsequently involve Thailand into some kind of economic or fiscal venture. Pridi thus proposed that the Japan-Thai agreement be confined solely within military matters.[2] After a long deliberation, four principles were finally agreed upon as a basis for the Thai demands in return for the passage of Japanese troops:

1. That Japan will not disarm the Thai armies.
2. That Japanese forces shall not stay in Bangkok.
3. That this agreement shall affect military matters only, and
4. That this agreement is final and conclusive.[3]

---

1. Jarun, pp. 186-188.
2. Direk, p. 136.
3. Ibid., p. 356, translated by the writer.

The Thai proposals were accepted by the Japanese. On 9 December the Prime Minister made a radio speech to the nation in which he said:

> His Majesty's Government has carefully considered this matter and deems it necessary that, despite our supreme effort to escape conflict, it is not possible to avoid that present situation. In view of the circumstances, to continue fighting would be wasteful shedding of blood. The Government has found it necessary to allow the passage of troops in return for the written agreement from the Japanese Government that it will respect our sovereignty, independence, and national honour. The fighting between Japanese and Thai forces has ended, and we have consented to let the Japanese pass through our country.
>
> I beg of our Thai nationals to subdue the excitement and to proceed with the job at hand. The Government will try its utmost to make the best of our predicament. Please be peaceful and follow the instructions of your Government. 1

Despite their reluctance, the Thais were drawn rapidly into the Japanese side. Thirteen days after the Japanese landing, a Defensive-Offensive Pact between Japan and Thailand was signed in Bangkok at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. On 25 January, 1942 Thailand declared war on Japan's enemies, Great Britain and the United States.[2] In April a goodwill mission, headed by Phaya Phanon, was sent to Japan. Cordial announcements, speeches, visits, and decorations were subsequently exchanged between the two countries.

---

1. Thalaengkan ratthaban (Government Announcement), Department of Public Relations, Bangkok, 1941, cited in ibid., pp. 199-200, translated by the writer.

2. These declarations of war were made without the counter-signature of Pridi, then a regent to King Ananthamahidon, as prescribed by the constitution. This enabled Pridi to declare at the end of the war that they were illegal and had been made against the wishes of the Thai people.

This development in Japan-Thai relations has been described as an opportunistic policy by the Thai military government. The critics point out that at first, Phibun was in agony as Japanese troops marched into Thailand, for he was worried that he had sided with the loser. But as the war went badly for the Allies, he was relieved and thereafter collaborated actively with Japan.[1] To demonstrate the Siamese frame of mind at that time, Phibun is quoted as having told his military colleagues: "Which side do you think will be defeated in this war? That side is our enemy."[2]

Phibun, however, denied this entirely. According to the Prime Minister, the conclusion of the Japan-Thai Defensive-Offensive Pact and the declarations of war on Great Britain and the United States did not stem from Thai initiative, and in consequence did not represent opportunism on their part. Phibun said that after the passage of troops had been granted, Japan continued to press for further commitments from Thailand.[3] As John Coast rightly comments, "Once having started the slippery road of friendship with Japan, Siam could not turn back."[4] Apparently, the Japanese trusted neither Phibun nor the Thai government. They constantly threatened to occupy the country and disarm its armed forces, unless the Thais

---

1. Coast, p. 19.

2. Net Khemayothin, Ngan taidin khorng phanek yothi (The Underground Work of Colonel Yothi), Bangkok, 1957, p. 1, cited by David A. Wilson, "Thailand," in George McT. Kahin (ed,), Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1959, p. 20.

3. Phibun, op. cit.

4. Coast, p. 19.

demonstrated "sincerity" by completely supporting Japan. The treaty of alliance with Japan and the declarations of war on Britain and America were the results of Japanese pressure. Fearing that the people would suffer brutality at the hands of the Japanese soldiers (as in China, Singapore, the Philippines, and elsewhere), the government capitulated. "Our alliance with Japan and the declarations of war on Great Britain and the United States," Phibun writes, "were our only way to save the life of the nation and the morale of the people, so that we would have a chance to fight back."[1]

Nor should Phibun be solely responsible for the Thai "mistake" in yielding to Japan. Though the Prime Minister was well-known for his aggressiveness, he was by no means a dictator. Despite its military image, the government was in fact a mixture of young military and civilian bureaucrats[2] who came to power through the 1932 revolution, the senior Promoters being excluded. Most of the major decisions, at least up to the Japanese entry, were made largely with the consensus of this group of officials whose mutual aim was national progress and survival. The characteristics of the Phibun Songkhram regime are perhaps accurately portrayed by A.T. Steele who visited Thailand shortly before the outbreak of the Pacific war:

> One of the world's crop of dictators, Major General Luang Pibul Songgram, 44 years old, is one of the youngest and certainly the handsomest. As premier of Thailand, commander-in-chief of the Thai Army, minister of foreign affairs, and minister of interior,

---

1. Phibun, op.cit.

2. Most of the Cabinet members were in their early forties at the time Japan attacked Thailand.

> Luang Pibul looks on paper to be a one-man government; actually, his power is not as absolute as his multiplicity of titles would indicate. Like most of his race he is a mild-mannered and compromising person who rides along with the tide and easily swayed by the advice of those about him. He is the voice of the army and that what gives him his power.1

After the Japanese invasion, however, there was a definite split among Thai leaders as to how to oppose the intruders and to preserve independence at the end of the war. After having been "promoted" out of the Cabinet into the Regency Council[2] Pridi immediately organised a "Free Thai" underground movement. At about the same time and without the knowledge of Pridi's organisation, Seni Pramoj, the Thai Ambassador to Washington, announced the formation of a "Free Siamese Movement" composing of Thai nationals in the United States. Seni also refused to deliver Thailand's declaration of war on America. In 1942 the Pridi group attempted to establish in China a Thai government in exile, but this was without success. At the end of 1943 they succeeded in making contact with Seni and the Americans. In 1944 definite contact with Britain was made, and the liberation movement expanded rapidly.[3] According

---

1. The Chicago Daily News, 14 March, 1941.

2. It is said that Pridi's appointment to the Regency Council was made at the suggestion of the Japanese who were aware of his pro-Allied sentiment. It also appeared that prior to the appointment, Pridi and Phibun had a serious disagreement concerning Thailand's loan to Japan to which Pridi opposed.

3. For the account of the Free Thai movement in Britain see Puey Unpakorn, "The Temporary Soldier," in Direk, pp. 380-434. For the account of Allied underground work in Thailand see Nicol Smith and Blake Clark, Into Siam: Underground Kingdom, New York, 1946.

to one report there were several tens of thousands trained and well-equipped Free Thais on V-J Day.[1] Although these forces were ready to fight Japan they were told by Lord Mountbatten to wait.[2] The suddenness of Japan's surrender deprived the Thai underground the opportunity to demonstrate the true sentiment of the Thai people.

Prime Minister Phibun and his military colleagues, on the other hand, seemed to have had unfailing faith in the Thai armed forces as the main source of national liberation. Since Japan and Thailand were supposedly on friendly terms, the Thai armies enjoyed a great deal of freedom and were kept at a high level of combat readiness. The damage suffered on the night of the Japanese landing was light and the morale of the troops was still high. This resulted from the fact that the decision to grant passage to the intruders was viewed as a necessity rather than a humiliation. Most troops and officers felt that they had not been defeated, but had been told to compromise.[3] The surprising good morale of the Thai armies was further uplifted when they successfully took over the Shan States of Burma in 1942. The action was regarded as part of the Thai contribution to its ally's war effort. In 1943 Thai forces occupied the four northern Malay states of Kedah, Perlis, Kalantan, and Trengganu which Thailand had ceded to Britain in 1909.

The military faction decided to follow a more complicated, or rather a more devious, approach to the problem of foreign occupation.

---

1. Coast, p. 29.

2. Ibid., p. 28.

3. Many units performed excellently in keeping the Japanese from advancing until a cease fire was ordered.

While they continued to give Japan minimum assistance, the Thais made considerable effort to undermine their ally's power. Yet at the same time they did not shy away from any "reward" given them by the Japanese: the Thais' take-over of the four Malay states being an example.[1] Nevertheless, there was little doubt that the military government attempted to extricate itself from its enforced alliance. The armed forces were employed as the instrument of this policy. In an effort to boost the public morale, the army was hailed as model of heroism and patriotism. To counter an increasing Japanese cultural influence, the Phibun government made several attempts to "improve" the Thai customs under the auspices of the newly-established Council of National Culture. Many elements of Western culture were introduced to make the Thais appear progressive and modern.[2] Western dresses and way of life were adopted. Western-style surname was introduced. Thai males were encouraged to kiss their wives before going to work. And the Thai system of writing and transliteration was simplified, etc. These programmes, according to the Prime Minister, were aimed at insulating the Thai civilisation from the creeping Japanese influence:

---

1. Many Thais, however, would argue that these territories were Thailand's rightful possessions. They were thus not a reward furnished by the Japanese.

2. Walter F. Vella, The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955, pp. 384-386.

> The main purpose of establishing the Council of National Culture was by no means to co-operate with Japan in the field of culture, but to oppose the Japanese cultural intrusion. I feared that our people might adopt Japanese-style dresses so I issued a decree that Thai women should adopt Western-style clothing. Table habits were to follow the European's by using fork and spoon as national utensils. This was to prevent the people from taking to chopsticks. Once the Japanese proposed to send a teacher to teach flower arrangement at our schools. I countered this move by having an exhibition of Thai flower decorations at the Council of National Culture. Knowing that ours was superior, I invited the Japanese to the show. Since then they never again proposed to teach us flower arrangement.[1]

Undoubtedly, Phibun was a nationalist, proud of his country and its long independence. Despite his earlier admiration of Japan's achievements, he became increasingly resentful of the uninvited Japanese soldiers. As early as 1942, the Prime Minister and his close associates began drawing up plans to oppose Japan militarily. Phibun sent some of his trusted officers to contact Chiang Kai-shek's men in Yunnan which resulted in a Sino-Thai secret agreement to fight Japan.[2] In 1943 the government began its clandestine co-operation with the Allied operation in Thailand. Through General Adul, the Chief of Police, Pridi's Free Thais were able to contact Mountbatten's Headquarters in Ceylon. This bold move, under the scrutiny of Japanese spies, was done via the Thai Police radio station in Bangkok.[3] In 1944, under the disguise of defence, a military capital designed as Phibun's resistance command

---

1. Phibun, op.cit., translated by the writer.
2. Net, pp. 19-25.
3. Coast, pp. 24-25.

was hurriedly constructed at Phetchabun. Surrounded by mountains and swamps, Phetchabun seemed an ideal place militarily. Being an ancient Thai base during a war against the Burmese, it also evoked historic sentiments. Several other logistic plans were launched to frustrate Japan's war effort and to prepare the Thai armed forces for an attack on the Japanese when an opportune time arrived.[1] These actions against Japan were considered a necessary measure in self-defence by the government. "We were no opportunists," stated the Prime Minister, "because we never made any previous arrangement with Japan whatever. It was Japan's mistake to attack our country without warning. We regarded this a serious crime in view of the fact that she had made a formal non-aggression pact with Thailand."[2]

Phibun's resistance activites were by no means completely unknown to the Japanese. The Japanese were well-aware of the Thais' resentment and grudging support. They neverthless realised that Japan could not afford to have Thailand as her enemy, particularly when her final defeat was gradually becoming a distinct possibility. The uneasy relationship between Tokyo and Bangkok was detected even by the outsiders. As B. Wittingham-Jones of The Daily Telegraph observed in late 1942:

> To what extent has Siam identified herself with Japan's "New Order" in Asia? That is the crucial question. Reading between the lines of the meagre trickle of news which has reached the outside world during the past nine months, I find significant and growing indications that Siam is an uneasy partner in the "New Order" and, indeed, only participates under duress.[3]

---

1. Phibun gave accounts of thirteen episodes in which he claimed to have sabotaged the Japanese war effort, Phibun, op.cit.
2. Ibid.
3. The Daily Telegraph, 9 October, 1942.

As it became increasingly apparent that the Allies would win the war, Thai political expediency made it impossible for the military to continue in power. Although Phibun's reluctant co-operation was appreciated, the Pridi faction felt it imprudent to include the Phibun party in their Free Thai underground movement. It was realised that if Thailand's independence was to be preserved Premier Phibun and his military colleagues had to be removed, to clear the way for a government more acceptable to the victors. Moreover, the Japanese, it was felt, were growing suspicious of the government.[1] It was generally feared that the Japanese would seize control of the administration entirely. The military party thus became a liability not only to the Western Allies but also to the Japanese. The Thai civilian elites, with the co-operation of some of Phibun's followers in the Assembly, made a move to oust the Prime Minister. On 29 July, 1944 Phibun's proposed bill on the Phetchabun project was defeated in the National Assembly. On 2 August he resigned the premiership. He was succeeded by Mr. Khuang Aphaiwong, a Promoter, and close associate of Pridi.

Though Phibun reluctantly conceded defeat, his military supporters were outraged. Threats of revolt were particularly intense when Phibun was subsequently relieved of his cherished post of Supreme Commander. To block any dangerous move by the Army, the Assembly appointed the popular Phaya Phahon in his place

---

1. Wanit Pananan, a pro-Japan minister in the Phibun Cabinet, was arrested on a charge of corruption and was later reported "dead by suicide" while in custody. The Japanese demanded an investigation, and asked to examine his body, but were refused by Phibun.

and made Phibun "adviser" to the new government. Khuang was twice sent by Pridi to convince Phibun, who was then residing at the military headquarters at Lopburi, about the need to preserve the country's independence through a totally new leadership. Khuang asked for Phibun's co-operation and commitment not to resort to force. Phibun replied that he "could not make any promises."[1] Only fear of Japanese intervention finally restrained Phibun and the aggressive Army. As one of Phibun's associates put it:

> Will there be any intervention by the Third Party if we decide to use force? I firmly believe that there will be. The Japanese were looking for an excuse to intervene in our affairs, and so far they don't have one yet. But if fighting occurs, it will give the Japanese sufficient reason to become the arbitrator. Finally they will surely disarm our armed forces. The Japanese have always wanted to disarm our Army, Navy, Air Force, and the Police. 2

The departure of the military from the political scene enabled Thai politcians to concentrate their effort on the task of preparing to negotiate with the victors. Upon Japan's surrender, Seni Pramoj was appointed Prime Minister. Once again the Thais were compelled to play one major power against the other: this time Britain against the United States. A British-trained lawyer, a founder of the Free Thai, and Ambassador to Washington, Seni seemed most suitable for the task. With American sympathy, Seni successfully concluded a peace treaty with Britain whereby the British, under American pressure, softened their earlier harsh

---

1. Jarun, pp. 265-269.
2. Colonel Khun Sri Sakorn, Letter to the Lady La-iad Phibunsongkhram, dated 8 August, 1944, cited in ibid., pp. 272-273, translated by the writer.

demands on Thailand.[1] The two powers recognised Thailand's independence despite Phibun's collaboration with Japan.[2] They also promised to support Thai membership in the United Nations. After diplomatic relations between Thailand and the Soviet Union were established and Thailand repealed its anti-Communist law of 1933, it was assured of the Soviet support for its seat in the world organisation. Thailand became the fifty-fifth member of the United Nations in November, 1946.

The years 1944-1947 saw the rapid decline of the military in Thai politics. Fewer men in uniform were appointed to the post-war cabinets, and all of whom were chosen upon their merits. While there were fifteen officers and only nine civilians in the Phibun Songkhram Cabinet, there were thirteen civilians and nine officers in the Khuang Aphiawong government of August, 1945. In the Seni Pramoj Administration only two out of twenty-two ministers were drawn from the armed forces. Concurrently, military organisations suffered a severe setback. Many officers were involuntarily retired and the North and the Northeast Armies were disbanded. Thousands of fighting men faced unemployment and hardship. The armed forces were demoralised and there were problems with soldiers who turned to lotting. The National Assembly passed a war crime statute by which Phibun and his followers were brought to trial.

---

1. Seni Pramoj, Chumnum niphon seni, (Collected Works), Ruam San Press, Bangkok, 1966, pp. 3-40.

2. In view of the fact that Seni did not deliver Thailand's declaration of war on the United States, the Americans, with great sympathy, refused to recognise the state of war with Thailand; and were thus ready to resume the pre-war relationship with her.

The Thai court, however, declared the law unconstitutional on the ground that it could not apply retroactively; the accused were then set free. Marshal Phibun announced that he would leave politics "for good."[1]

Thus it can be said that the collapse of military rule in Thailand was of external rather than internal origin. This confirms the earlier thesis that Thai politics fluctuated in accordance with international events. The main reasons for the decline of the military are traceable to Phibun's decision not to resist the Japanese. Once that policy had been formulated, successive events were of small significance and were often beyond the government's control. The military party found itself increasingly identified with Japan, something which could not be avoided. Occupying an exposed position as both Prime Minister and Supreme Commander, Phibun was in an exceedingly difficult dilemma. To prevent the Japanese from taking over the entire country, he had to co-operate with them or at least show willingness to comply with their requests. In consequence, the Thai armed forces had to contribute to the cause of its ally. Nothing short of total collaboration would have convinced the Imperial Army, which was notorious for having its own hard-line foreign policy. On the other hand, the Field Marshal was aware that Thailand was siding with the loser. His much-quoted

---

1. Jakrawan Channuwong, Jormphon thanorm kittikhajorn phonek praphet jarusathian lae warasutthai khorng jormphon por phibunsongkhram (Field Marshal Thanom Kittikhajorn, General Praphet Jarusathian and the Downfall of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram), Maeban Kanruan Press, Bangkok, 1964, p. 147.

statement - "Which side do you think will be defeated in this war? That side is our enemy" - which has been interpreted as his reason for declaring war on the Western Allies, was in fact directed at Japan.[1] In the light of the history of politics it was not altogether impractical for Phibun to turn against the Japanese when the opportunity arose. To prepare for such a move under the very eyes and ears of the Japanese was exceedingly dangerous, however. Consequently, the military plan for resistance progressed very slowly and to a large extent, ineffectively. The main problem seemed to have been the maintenance of strict security. The true intentions of many disguised projects could not be disclosed.[2] Hence, there was widespread public hostility against the government. This was particularly true in the case of the military headquarters at Phetchabun, where thousands of labourers' lives were lost because of malaria during construction. Fear that the already suspicious Japanese would destroy the country complicated the tactics. More important perhaps, time seemed to have run out. Thus, the liberation movement had to be entrusted entirely to the Free Thais who enjoyed the advantage of not having been identified with the aggressors. In spite of the fact that the previous decision to co-operate with Japan was made unanimously, the military had to be made into the sole scapegoat. Its image of ruthlessness ideally

---

1. This remark was made to his Chief of Staff in the course of Phibun's argument that Japan would eventually run out of her resources in a prolonged war and would be defeated, Phibun op.cit.

2. Ibid.

fit the role of a villain. In order to survive after the war all Siamese national vices had to be attributed to its armies, who had come to be identified with the international villain - the Japanese. Field Marshal Phibun and the Thai military served this role remarkably well.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MILITARY IN POSTWAR POLITICS

After the Second World War the military was in eclipse. This may be viewed as a departure from the Thai political norm, for the generals had always enjoyed prominence and power. Men such as Field Marshal Phibun, General Prayoon and General Mangkorn had been in the limelight since 1932, and even prior to their takeover of the royal government. The withdrawal of the armed forces into the background stemmed largely from influences of an external nature. The political decision to bring Phibun and his wartime colleagues to trial, for instance, resulted from fear of a possible Allied intervention. Shortly after it was learnt that Premier Tojo was to be courtmartialled, the Thai Assembly passed War Crime Legislation by which the Phibun faction[1] was prosecuted. This rapid move, which consequently shattered the morale and self-confidence of the officer corps, was actually initiated to prevent the Western powers from interfering with Thailand's sovereignty.[2]

Yet, there were aspects of Thai political continuity to be seen during this brief period. There was the presence of force or threat of force as an instrument of political action. Pridi's

---

1. Fourteen members of Phibun's group, some of whom were civilian, were the victims of this search for a scapegoat.

2. Chot Hatsabamroe and Pricha Sammakkhitham, 35 pi haeng yuk prachathipatai (Thirty-five Years of Democratic Era), Mitjaroen Press, Bangkok, 1968, pp. 227-228.

group, it should be noted, was backed by a strong well-armed militia, the Free Thais, the number of which increased sharply after the war.[1] The civilian government enjoyed the support of the majority of the populace which considered Pridi a national hero.[2] Any military take-over at this particular time would undoubtedly ensure a bloody show of force. It would probably invite Allied military intervention, which, to most Thais, should be avoided at all cost.

Despite the temporary setback of the military, however, the possibility of a coup d'etat had not altogether vanished from Thai political scene. To counter the Army, Navy officers such as Admiral Sangworn Suwannachip, Captain Luang Suphachalasai, and Admiral Luang Thamrong were invited to join the civilian Cabinets. On 6 March, after Phibun was released from custody following the Supreme Court's decision, it was feared that he would return to politics. Many high-ranking retired and active officers paid frequent "courtesy calls" on Phibun, gestures which disturbed the civilians. "Field Marshal Phibun's charisma," states a Thai author, "has by no means diminished."[3] Hence, in point of fact, the Thai military, as it later became clear, was merely waiting for an excuse to intervene.

---

1. Many so-called Free Thais joined the movement only after the war, knowing it to be the source of influence and prestige. Other members were proclaimed Free Thai after the Japanese surrender for security reasons.
2. Pridi became the sole Regent to King Ananthamahidon. He was referred to as "the Elder Statesman" (Ratthaburut awuso) and was at the height of his political career.
3. Withet Korani, Chiwit lae kantorsu khornghasib ratthamontri (Lives of Fifty Ministers), P.A.N. Press, Bangkok, 1963, p. 160.

While the military was in the background, Thai postwar politics exhibited many hopeful signs. Political activity came to life after a decade of absolutist rule. In 1945, political parties were formed for the first time in Thailand's history. Pridi's followers organised the Constitutional Front (Naew Rathathammanum) and Co-operative (Sahachip) parties while the Progressive (Kaw-na) Party was founded by Kuekrit Pramoj, Seni's younger brother. Khuang Aphaiwong set up the Democratic (Prachathipat) Party. The atmosphere was further brightened by the return of King Ananthamahidon from his studies in Switzerland. The young monarch was greeted with popular enthusiasm. A general election was held on 12 January, 1946. Most of the representatives elected to the Assembly belonged to the Pridi-controlled Constitutional Front and Co-operative parties. On 24 March, 1946 Pridi took over the premiership from Khuang who became disenchanted with the Pridi group. On 9 May, 1946 a new constitution came into force providing the legislature with two houses in the National Assembly: the House of the People's Representatives and the House of Elders.[1] On 10 June, 1946 Pridi resigned his prime ministership on the ground of ill-health. He nominated Re r Admiral Thamrong Nawasawat, a close associate, to succeed him. Thamrong became Prime Minister on 24

---

1. Modelled after the British House of Lords. But members of the House of Elders were not noblemen. They we e largely bureaucrats nominated to the seats by the House of Representatives.

August, 1946, but the real power behind the government was Pridi. As leader of the Free Thais and with his followers commanding a clear majority in both houses, Pridi was apparently in an unchallenged position.

Dr. Pridi was not unchallengeable, however. Khuang's Democratic Party became his most outspoken antagonist. Wealthy, honest, and an excellent speaker, Khuang consistently pointed to numerous public grievances against the government. Corruption was widespread within almost all branches of the administration; and Pridi's supporters were among those who actively engaged in various illegal practices. The regime was given the name of "Buick Government" because despite economic hardship the government purchased brand new Buick automobiles one for each minister.[1] There were serious problems of a rising crime rate, inflation, and the scarcity of rice. "Siamese peasants," said a reporter, "have been hoarding rice rather than sell for money which would buy nothing; Chinese merchants, a seriously top heavy element in Siamese economy, have been cornering rice; and there is inordinate Black Market smuggling of rice out of Siam to surrounding countries."[2] Although most of these economic and social ills were the results of war and the Japanese occupation,[3] and despite Pridi's honesty, his prestige and popularity declined rapidly.

---

1. Alexander Macdonald, Bangkok Editor, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1950, p. 149.
2. The Scotsman, 11 November, 1947.
3. Ibid.

The military also made known of its own complaints against the government. Several retired officers charged that the country completely neglected its armed forces, and that the defence organisation was in ruin. War veterans were abandoned without any means of supporting themselves.[1] National security, so they charged, was threatened by the government's ambitious effort to form a regional organisation which would include Laos, Cambodia, and Viet Nam. This scheme, they said, would certainly antagonise the French, who returned to the area after the war. The abolition of the law against communism greatly alarmed the officers who accused the Pridi party of heading towards a Soviet-style government.[2]

The crisis of civilian government culminated on 9 June, 1946, when King Ananthamahidon was found shot in his bed. The Thamrong government was unable to furnish a conclusive explanation of the tragedy.[3] The opposition demanded a general debate, to vote no-confidence in the Cabinet. Their main charges were stated as follows:

---

1. Jarun, pp. 363-365.
2. Ibid., pp. 365-369.
3. First the government announced that the death was caused by a pistol accident. Later it was said to be a case of suicide. Although the Dika (Supreme) Court gave a verdict which condemned three men to death for having conspired in the murder of the king, the true nature of the case is still largely unclear to the public. A book published recently in Britain (Royne Kruger, The Devil's Discus, Cassell and Co., London, 1964) attempting to investigate the case was banned in Thailand. This is due to the fact that since Pridi, now a resident of China, is implicated in this plot, any change in public opinion would greatly affect the political situation in Thailand.

1. The Government fails to keep internal peace and tranquility.
2. It fails to maintain a stable fiscal policy and consequently the national financial position is in jeopardy.
3. It follows the wrong course of economic activity. In consequence, the people are suffering from economic hardship.
4. In the field of foreign relations, the Government fails to accord international confidence.
5. It causes serious decay in the bureaucracy by interfering in the civil service.
6. It fails to give appropriate support to the administrators. Hence the bureaucracy is demoralised.
7. The Government fails to pursue the educational programmes as mentioned in its policy statement.
8. It fails to obtain conclusive evidence in respect to the king's death.[1]

Though the Thamrong government survived a vote of no-confidence, the debate greatly damaged its position. The Prime Minister resigned his post, only to form another Cabinet in June, 1947. In spite of this Cabinet reshuffle the debate, which lasted eight days and was broadcast to the public,[2] had already made the government appear corrupt and ineffective in the eyes of many people. Meanwhile the Democrats and the press intensified their attacks on the government.

I. Old Tactics and New Situation

At about 11 o'clock on 8 November, 1947 Thailand's third successful bloodless coup occurred. Prime Minister Thamrong, Pridi and their supporters were driven into hiding.[3] On 9 November a

---

1. Kiat, Phongsawadan kanmuang (Political Chronicles), Kiattisak Press, Bangkok, 1950, pp. 142-144, translated by the writer.
2. See ibid., pp. 158-212 for details of the debate.
3. It was reported that Thamrong and Pridi were given sanctuary by the Navy. It was said that "the navy had nothing to do with the recent coup although it was an understood reality that they promised not to interfere provided there was no bloodshed." The North China Daily News, 27 November, 1947.

radio broadcast announced that Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram had taken control of the country as head of the military party called Khana rathaprahan or "The Coup d'Etat Group." An interim constitution was proclaimed. The officers justified their action as follows:

> Whereas ever since the establishment of the House of Elders and the House of Representatives following the promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam, B.E. 2489 (1946), the internal political conditions of the country have been changing. The country faced an emergency such as never happened before. The economic and living conditions of the people were affected and deteriorated to a serious degree. Under such circumstances it could have been anticipated that the country would continue to get worse and would finally reach disaster, if the situation was not remedied in time. In view of the above a group of persons consisting of members of the armed forces, the police forces and the civilians decided unanimously to carry out a coup d'etat in order to abolish the Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam, B.E. 2489 (1946) and to bring into force the Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam (Provisional), B.E. 2490 (1947). In so doing, events have proceeded in peace and without any show of force. Moreover in affecting the coup d'etat, its promoters had no desire other than to remedy and stem the deterioration of the country as a means towards alleviating the hardship of the people and ameliorate the country to permanent security. Their purpose is not one of personal benefit or reward in any way.[1]

It is now known that Field Marshal Phibun was not the key man behind the action. The Coup d'Etat Group, comprised largely of retired Army officers, was led by Lieutenant General Phin Chunahawan, Colonel Kaj Kajsongkhram, Colonel Khun Jamnong Phumiwet, and Colonel Nom Ketnut. Phibun was said to have been brought in to render "prestige"to the group.[2] The coup makers said that they had

---

1. "Act to Indemnify Promoters of the Coup d'Etat, B.E. 2490," Royal Thai Government Gazette 1948-1949, International Translation, Bangkok, pp. 75-76.

2. The New York Times, 9 November, 1947.

the consent of General Adul, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Chief of Police, to avoid bloodshed.[1] General Phin, their leader and spokesman, made it known that despite the officers' high esteem for Phibun, "some competent persons" would be invited to head the Cabinet.[2] Khuang was persuaded to form the new government while Phibun held the title of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. After long negotiation, Khuang reluctantly agreed. The reasons for his hesitation and subsequent acceptance of the premiership have been postulated as follows:

> When Phibun invited Khuang to form a Government, the latter hesitated before accepting. In the first place the Coup was not of his making; it had come too suddenly and through the wrong channels to please him, and he wanted no responsibility for it. And, even more important, he had no desire to be considered a puppet of the soldiers. Phibun, however, assured Khuang that after the post-war experience, he was a changed man: there would be no interference from him. But though the Democrats were unready, the only alternative to their taking over, presumably, would have been a Government of Phibun's old military elements, with civil disturbances almost certain to ensue between the Army and the "Free Thais" remnants. After night-long conferences, Khuang and his friends agreed to form a Government, but only after threatening to resign if the soldiers should interfere.[3]

International pressure might have prevented the officers from forming their own government. As the news of the coup reached Washington, American officials were reported to have said that Phibun still was remembered as "the man who declared war on the

---

1. The News Chronicle, 10 November, 1947.

2. The New York Times, 10 November, 1947.

3. John Coast, Some Aspects of Siamese Politics, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1953, p. 41.

Allies."[1] And that any Thai government under his leadership would be unwelcomed by the Western powers. They pointed out, however, that should the military party allow other moderate figures to form the government "it might be regarded differently."[2] Evidently, this hostile foreign reaction compelled Phibun to declare his sincere motive in leading the coup d'etat, saying that he was "forced to assume responsibility for the overthrow of the government by the military party, whose aim is to establish stable and honest government."[3] Ten days after the coup, it was disclosed that Britain and the United States would recognise the new Thai Government only after Phibun Songkhram had resigned his assumed post of Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.[4] The two powers, it was reported, realised that eventually they would have to grant a de facto recognition to the Khuang government. They felt, nevertheless, that they could not do so as long as Phibun Songkhram held his present position.[5] Hence on 24 November Khuang announced that Phibun would be demoted from the rank of Commander of the Armed Forces to Commander of the Army. However, Khuang said that his government could not carry on without Phibun's assistance:

---

1. The New York Times, 10 November, 1947.
2. Ibid.
3. The Times, 11 November, 1947.
4. The North China Daily News, 20 November, 1947.
5. Ibid.

> What the rest of the world do not realise is that Siam has two parties. I blame the United States and Britain for this because they armed the Free Thais army for the fight against the Japanese. There is nothing wrong with that itself but the Nai Pridi Government has refused to disarm the Free Thai using them as its private army...When I attempted to introduce a legislation to disarm the Free Thais as premier after the war, Pridi led the opposition in the government and my government failed in forty-five days. Phibun is strong enough to disarm the Free Thais to allow Siam to continue its peaceful existence. I realise the world is prejudiced against Phibun, but my government still needs him for internal peace. When the world sees that I am leading an honest government and the members of the cabinet and the Senate are incorruptible, I am confident the world will then recognise my regime.[1]

Khuang proceeded with his reform policy despite the major powers' non-recognition. He announced a plan to attack corruption, high cost of living and crime. He promised to solve the mystery of King Ananthamahidon's death and to reorganise the bureaucracy.[2] A new Senate was formed under the provisional constitution. Members of the Senate were said to be "venerable gentlemen, picked for their integrity and record of past service."[3] On 29 January a general election was held whereby Khuang's Democratic Party captured a clear majority (fifty-three out of one hundred seats) in the House. In February Great Britain, the United States, and China granted a formal recognition to the government, only after Khuang had won an overwhelming vote of confidence in the Assembly.

---

1. Ibid.
2. Coast, p. 42.
3. Ibid., p. 43.

However, Khuang was not permitted to carry out his programmes. On 6 April, 1948 the Prime Minister was visited by four Army officers at his residence. They delivered an ultimatum asking him to resign within twenty-four hours.[1] The military group said that it was not satisfied with the performance of the government. "Siam is a very sick country at present. Her suffering was so intense that a change of doctor seemed essential."[2] Khuang, a man of principle, attempted to resist the Army threat by calling upon the Air Force and the Navy for assistance. Khuang failed and the Cabinet tendered its resignation. The Prime Minister's lonely struggle against the Army's intimidation is well portrayed by John Coast:

> ...Khuang called a full Cabinet meeting at which it was decided to try to suppress the Army revolt. Khuang attempted to reach the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Admiral Sindhu; but he was spending the evening at a private film-showing at Phibun's house. He later phoned Khuang, promising to come to see him at dawn. The Cabinet did manage to contact the Marshall of the Air Force, but he said that his Force was too small to oppose the Army. After a long discussion, therefore, the Cabinet decided that it would probably have to resign. A Government that could rely on none of its Armed Forces was, it felt, ipso facto, not a Government. It wrote out its resignation that night, holding it over till the following day, when they would hear the Navy's point of view from Admiral Sinthu. Admiral Sinthu arrived at Khuang's house at dawn. He reported that the Navy was not ready, and that anyhow it always tried to keep neutral in such affairs.[3]

---

1. The four officers were Colonel Khun Jamnong Phumiwer, Major General Sawat Sawatdikiat, Colonel Lamai Utthayananon, and Colonel Khun Sinsornchai.

2. The North China Daily News, 12 April, 1948.

3. Coast, p. 46.

The seizure of power by the Coup d'Etat Group, was to a large extent the outcome of a long series of failures on the part of civilian politicians. Because corruption and inflation were a "natural" repercussion of the war, this was no excuse for Pridi's men to engage in devious enterprises and to fail to remedy the economy. Furthermore, unity between the civilians came to an abrupt end following the conclusion of peace treaties with the big powers. Seni broke away from Pridi on matters of principle and differences in foreign policy.[1] Khuang deeply resented Pridi's monopoly of power and wanted to disassociate himself from Pridi's corrupted followers. Both men, due to their great prestige and candour, became the most influential voice of dissent, and did much to arouse public disenchantment. The government responded with repressive measures. Press censorship was imposed and arbitrary arrests were made, not unlike a military dictatorship. Many Free Thai men, some of whom became so identified only after the war, established themselves as political hoodlums. They harrassed the election and made attempts on the lives of several opposition candidates. This unfortunate state of affairs came at the time when the Thai political system urgently needed an effective and united civilian government in order to prove the validity and strength of a democracy. Political parties had just been created and democratic political processes based on free speech had just emerged. But these infant democratic institutions were not given

---

1. Seni Pramoj, Seni niphon (M.R. Seni Pramoj's Writings) Ruam San Press, Bangkok, 1966, p. 30.

adequate time and nourishment to survive the harsh Siamese political climate.

The collapse of the experiment in democracy in Thailand was perhaps due to the failure of the West to intervene in Thai internal politics - when it was prudent to do so. As early as 1945 when the British presented the Thais with the "Twenty-One Points" ultimatum, a precautionary measure to prevent a military take-over in Thailand was also included. Britain demanded that the Thais accept a military mission to help reorganise the armed forces. Having suffered considerably from the actions of the Thai military government during the war, Britain wanted to be assured of a friendly democratic administration in Bangkok. The Thais, however, viewed this demand as a serious interference in their sovereignty. "It is a direct breach of our independence," Seni stated, "and would amount to a surrender of our armed forces to them altogether."[1] Thus Thai diplomats moved swiftly to bring American pressure to bear on Britain.[2] The success of Thai diplomacy assisted by the United States' "anti-colonial" attitude was responsible for British leniency and the elimination of their earlier demand to remodel the Thai military.[3]

One is tempted, nonethless, to ponder whether the plan, as originally envisaged by Whitehall had it not been objected to by

---

1. Ibid., p. 30.

2. A New York Times editorial accused the United States of allowing Britain to bully Thailand and to recontrol Southeast Asia, ibid., p. 93.

3. Ibid., pp. 50-100.

the Americans could have prevented the military from taking over the government. Since no detail of this proposal has been made public, it is difficult to estimate the chance of success. Sir Josiah Crosby, who was the British Minister to Bangkok before the war, neverthless, did provide some idea of the British intentions. Although he did not elaborate on the exact nature of sanctions to be imposed on the Thai government, Crosby called upon Great Britain and America to lend enthusiastic support to Thai civilian liberals who, if allowed, should be able to carry on a democratic form of government. He proposed a reduction of the Thai armed forces which he viewed as an obstacle to the growth of democracy in Thailand:

> My readers will have gathered...that the democratic experiment has been a failure in Siam because there was no vaild public opinion at the back of it, because it could have been neither begun nor continued without the armed support of the military and because the latter, coming to realise that all effective power was vested in themselves, preceded to exercise that power to their own exclusive advantage. Arguing from these premises, I have elsewhere put forward the conclusion, which I judge to be indisputable, that "in any country when the traditional form of government has been weakened or destroyed, and where there is no effective public opinion to supplement or replace it, the existence of relatively powerful Armed Forces must represent a standing menace to the growth of democratic institutions." If what has happened before is not to happen again after the United Nations have withdrawn from exercising any direct control over Siam, if the danger is to be removed of the Armed Forces once more in the future smothering democratic government, seizing all authority for themselves and relegating liberal statesmen to their wilderness - if these things are to be prevented, then there will be nothing for it but for the United Nations to bring about the disbandment of the Siamese Fighting Services, or at least their reduction to such dimensions that they will be no more than adequate for the maintenance of internal peace and order.[1]

1. Sir Josiah Crosby, Siam: The Crossroads, Hollis and Carter Ltd. London, 1945, p. 152.

Well-intentioned and idealistic as it sounds, it is difficult to see how this plan could have been implemented. To carry out the idea, either Britain or the Allies would probably have to impose a certain political system, or even constitutional prescriptions, as in the case of Japan, on Thailand. Troops would have to be stationed in the country for a certain (perhaps long) period of time to prevent any undemocratic interruption. To be realistic, nothing short of a thorough purge or a temporary dissolution of the Thai armed forces together with the Allies' military occupation, as in Germany and Japan, would have made it work. If implemented, the British plan, benevolent as it seemed, would have undoubtedly been resented by the Thais who are jealously sensitive of their long independence. As time went by, however, this resentment would have very likely begun to disappear. Success in establishing a democracy in Thailand would in the long run have benefited the common people and should have been appreciated by most Thais.

On 8 April Phibun succeeded Khuang as Prime Minister. He was invited to form the new government because he was regarded as "the most suitable person to cope with the emergency."[1] On 4 May, twenty-six days after his appointment, the government was recognised by Great Britain, the United States, and China. Although there was no evidence to indicate that the second coup was the result of a long-range, pre-conceived plan, it nevertheless resembled the tactics of 1932 when the Promoters installed a civilian government to

---

1. The North China Daily News, 12 April, 1948.

soften hostile foreign reactions which led to their eventual assumption of power. (The same method was faithfully emulated by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat in 1957 when he made Mr. Pote Sarasin Prime Minister following the overthrow of the Phibun Songkhram government.) Whatever the real plan may have been, the prompt Western recognition of the Phibun government came as a surprise to many observers who were puzzled by the drastic change in the British and American attitudes toward the officers, especially toward Phibun. For it was only six months earlier that Phibun was unwelcomed and was referred to as "the former dictator."[1] The prevailing reason behing this abrupt shift in Western policy (or what seemed to have been the policy) probably lay in the turn of international power politics. The world situation between 1947-1948 had deteriorated drastically for the West. Britain and America were greatly alarmed by the inroads of Communism in Greece, Turkey, and the whole of Asia. A Communist coup d'etat in Czechoslovakia and increased Soviet threats prompted the United States and its allies to increase their commitments to the defence of Western Europe. The British were particularly concerned over a Communist uprising in Malaya and Burma. The French were attempting to defeat the Viet Minh forces. And the Dutch were trying to impose their rule in Indonesia. China was rapidly falling into the hands of the Liberation Army. Thailand, alone of all the countries in Southeast Asia, was relatively peaceful and seemed strong enough to be made into Western stronghold against the spread of the new ideology. In consequence, the Western

---

1. The Glasgow Herald, 10 November, 1947.

powers were extremely eager to obtain the co-operation of whoever controlled the de facto power in Thailand.

II. A Quest for Security

Since the end of the Second World War, Thai leaders were increasingly aware of the new power shifts around the world. Thai elites, civilian and military alike, were also sympathetic to the nationalist movements in the developing countries,[1] particularly in Southeast Asia. Hence Thailand assisted Laos, Cambodia, and Viet Nam in their struggle for independence against France, who insisted on restoring her empire in Indochina. Thai assistance to her neighbours[2] was a cause of animosity between Bangkok and Paris. In April, 1946, for example, France charged Thailand for aiding the Lao Issarek (Free Laotian) and allowing other independence organisations to use Thailand as base against France.[3] In November, 1946 Thailand agreed to return to France the territories the Phibun government had acquired under the May 1941 treaty in Tokyo, on condition that France would hand them over to Laos and Cambodia.[4] Since Thailand enjoyed a long experience of non-colonial status, Thai civilians, especially Pridi, were determined to make Thailand a rallying point of Asian nationalism.

---

1. Thailand's record in the United Nations shows that it consistently supported the granting of independence to former colonial countries. Thailand also strongly opposed the partition of Korea and Viet Nam.
2. Thailand's concern for independence movements, however, did not extend to British Burma and Malaya. After the war, Thailand promptly returned to Britain the four northern Malay states and the Burmese Shan states and considered the matter closed.
3. Russell H. Fifield, The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1958, p. 245.
4. Ibid., p. 244.

In early 1947 they proposed to France that the two countries assist in forming the Southeast Asia Union, which would embrace the independent states of Laos, Cambodia, and Viet Nam. If this scheme materialised, Burma, Malaya, the Philippines, and Indonesia would be encouraged to participate. "Pridi" it is said, "was advocating, almost for the first time in Siam's history, an international foreign policy."[1] The Thai initiative, however, was not welcomed by the French who were more interested in their resumption of power in Asia. After the Dutch, like the French, began their anachronistic policy in Indonesia, an organisation called the Southeast Asian League was formed in Bangkok. Exiled Asian nationalists met in Thailand to plan the liberation of their countries. The Thai civilian government continued to supply arms and materials to the independence forces in Laos and Cambodia until November, 1947 when it was overthrown by the Coup d'Etat Group.[2]

When Phibun became Prime Minister in April, 1948 Thailand's policy towards the Asian nationalists did not change substantially. In July, 1948 Phibun declared that Thailand regarded the Viet Minh as an independence movement and not a Communist conspiracy.[3] Consequently, fifty thousand Vietnamese refugees were given asylum in Thailand. Ho Chi Minh's supporters were allowed to establish a headquarters in Bangkok. And the Thais assisted the Lao Issarak and the Khmer Issarak (Free Cambodia) in their struggle for freedom.[4]

---

1. Coast, p. 38.
2. Fifield, p. 249.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

Phibun nevertheless was deeply concerned with the development in China and its ramifications in Thailand. As the civil war on the Chinese mainland increasingly intensified, so did the conflicts between the Communist and the Kuomintang supporters among Thailand's three million Chinese. A few days after the overthrow of the Khuang Aphaiwong government, Phibun expressed his anxiety over the possibility of trouble within the Chinese community. "The slightest slip on the part of the administration will lead to unrest," said the Prime Minister, "The Chinese were once very angry with me, but, of course, there will be no infringement on the rights of the Chinese in this country."[1] To prevent the growing animosity between the Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung factions in Thailand, the government proposed a bill to reduce the Chinese immigration quota from ten thousand to two hundred a year; similar to other nationalities. The police announced its campaign against the Chinese secret societies, hoodlums and "other disruptive elements."[2] On 15 June, 1948, Thai authorities raided Chinese schools, associations, and societies. A large number of Chinese Communists, including forty secret society leaders, were arrested.[3] The event marked the beginning of the government's drive to restore law and order as well as to limit the Chinese political influence. The Thai government was nevertheless careful not to make the action appear as an exclusive anti-Communist move. In July, 1948 the Kuomintang was prohibited from recruiting

---

1. The North China Daily News, 12 April, 1948.
2. The Daily Telegraph, 10 May, 1948.
3. The Manchester Guardian, 17 June, 1948.

members among the Chinese minority. The Ministry of Interior announced that the Kuomintang became an illegal organisation in Thailand because it "came under a Siamese law prohibiting alien societies from engaging in political activity."[1] In August another police raid was launched against the Chinese whereby two hundred persons were arrested. Local Thai newspapers reported that this action had driven many Communist leaders into Indochina.[2] Yet Thai officials maintained that the arrests were aimed against "secret society, gangsterism, extortion, and other crimes."[3] It was clear that the Phibun government, by purging both the Communist and the Kuomintang Chinese, attempted to avoid antagonising a major power, the Soviet Union.

Phibun was by no means a Communist sympathiser. This stemmed from his belief that Communist ideology was unsuitable and alien to Thai traditions.[4] "Ninety-nine per cent of Siamese," said the Prime Minister, "do not cherish Communism because it is a doctrine which although making good reading theoretically, is impracticable."[5] As a genuine nationalist and a soldier, he also saw in Communist movement a foreign menace to his country's safety and independence. Phibun was aware that since 1945 Communist uprising in Southeast Asia had become a major threat to neighbouring countries. Soon after

---

1. The New York Times, 28 July, 1948.
2. The Daily Mail, 14 August, 1948.
3. Ibid.
4. The Straits Times, 19 April, 1948.
5. Ibid.

taking office, he ordered a tight border security and promised harsh treatment to Communists reported to be crossing into Thailand from Malaya.[1] He expressed sympathy for the people and government of Malaya in their efforts against the terrorists. "We are extremely sorry," said Phibun, "that Communist disturbances have broken out in a friendly neighbouring country. We hope peace and order will be restored, as soon as possible."[2] Thailand thus rendered support to the British in their fight against Communism in Malaya. As a report at the time stated:

> There is no hesitation about the Marshal's policy. He is co-operating in the closest fashion with the Malayan authorities in their efforts to suppress Communist terrorism. He has sent troops and police to the border areas to deny Siamese territory to terrorists trying to escape from Malaya, and he has dispatched naval force to work with British vessels in cutting off illicit traffic in arms and military supplies. Much of the border country is trackless, and the Siamese authorities may not be able to close it entirely, but their co-operation is undeniably useful and testifies to the strength of the friendly relations which have long existed between Siam and this country.[3]

The Prime Minister was deeply concerned with Communist influence among Thailand's Chinese minority, particularly the journalists, teachers, and students. In 1949 the circulation of the Chinese Communist newspaper, Chuan Min Pao, estimated at ten thousand, was rising rapidly.[4] An approximate number of Communists

---

1. The North China Daily News, 14 June, 1948.
2. The Straits Times, 15 July, 1948.
3. The Times, 6 October, 1948.
4. The Times, 19 February, 1949.

in Thailand was believed to be thirty thousand.[1] There was an active branch of the Chinese Communist Party, with close affiliations with China. And the Chinese business community was said to be sympathetic to Mao Tse-tung, or hostile to Chiang Kai-shek.[2] To Phibun this situation posed a delicate problem for internal as well as external policies of Thailand. On the one hand, he saw an urgent need to take drastic actions against Communist activites. In addition to the police periodic raids on the suspected groups and the limitation on Chinese immigration, the government attempted to insulate the Thais from Communist influence by various means. For example, in late 1948 a Thai labour union was organised with Phibun as its patron. Its announced purpose was to "promote the welfare of agricultural and industrial workers...based on the pattern of the Labour Party in Britain."[3] Its principal intention, however, was to distract Thai labourers from the Communist-dominated unions sponsored by Chinese. On the other hand, Phibun was aware of his old reputation of a dictator and attempted to display a democratic image. Thus while actively pursuing an anti-Communist programme, Field Marshal Phibun declared that he had no plan to request a parliamentary ban on the Communist Party. "It is more like democratic practice," said the Prime Minister, "to let the party remain legal, as England and America do."[4] It is noteworthy that in 1947 there

---

1. Ibid. This figure was based on the number of adult male demonstrators in the May Day 1947. Some observers, however, believe that there were only a few hundred active Communists in Thailand in 1949.
2. Ibid.
3. The Hindu, 20 April, 1948.
4. The North China Daily News, 16 October, 1948.

was only one Thai professed Communist in the National Assembly and he was not re-elected to the legislature after the 1947 coup.[1] Communist activity, at that time, was almost exclusively Chinese.[2]

To most Thais, behind this growing Communist threat loomed the picture of China. Historically, since the establisment of their first kingdom in the thirteenth century the Thais have tried to avoid close relations with China. While acknowledging China's superiority in Asia, Thailand successfully minimised her influence.[3] In almost eighty years since the first official contact with the West, beginning in 1855 with Britain, until the revolution of 1932, despite a brief exchange of goodwill between the two countries, the Promoters refused to enter into any official contact with China fearing it might create difficult problems in their dealing with Thailand's large Chinese minority.[4] Only in 1946 as part of the political compromise, did Thailand establish official relations with China. By and large, Thailand's policy towards Peking may be described as "a pattern of keeping a more or less respectful distance, a pattern of careful avoidance.[5]

---

1. Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, The Left Wing in Southeast Asia, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1950, p. 60.
2. Ibid., p. 51.
3. George Modelski, "Thailand and China: From Avoidance to Hostility," in A.M. Halpern (ed.), Policies Towards China, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1965, p. 350.
4. Ibid., p. 351.
5. Ibid., p. 350.

In late 1948 the possibility of Mao's victory in China caused anxiety among Thai leaders. While regarding the situation on the Thai-Malay boundary as completely under control, the Phibun government was deeply concerned about the Communist menace from the North and Northeast. A Thai newspaper was said to have learned about Phibun's plans to resist a Communist aggression over the northern border near the Shan states of Burma.[1] "According to senior Army officers, Siamese defence authorities anticipated a Communist assault on Siam from China, accompanied by a campaign of terrorism and sabotage by insurgents within Siam."[2] In early 1949 the Thai government alerted police and security forces to combat a possible Communist insurgency in the country in view of the Liberation Army's success in mainland China.[3] On 17 February a state of emergency was declared. This action, it was said, was a precautionary measure against Communist unrest. Premier Phibun was reported to have announced his receipt of information from Paris that "Ho Chi Minh had definitely joined hands with the Chinese Communist leader, Mao Tse-tung."[4] This, and the civil war in Burma, "had increased the Siamese anxiety over Communist infiltration, insidious propaganda and the war of nerves."[5] In May the Thai Defence Minister, Luang Chat Nakrob, told the officers corps that they should stay away from politics because it was vitally important that they be well-prepared for "the war that lies ahead."[6]

---

1. The North China Daily News, 25 November, 1948.
2. Ibid.
3. The Straits Times, 3 February, 1949.
4. The Times, 18 February, 1949.
5. Ibid.
6. The Straits Times, 27 May, 1949.

"Each day the verbal struggle of political doctrines can be seen developing into what, in the near future, will be a real struggle of force. Once the struggle has begun, there can be little question that Siam will be involved. Therefore, we must prepare, we must be on the alert."[1] In early 1950 Thailand requested the Viet Minh representatives to close their office in Bangkok.[2] The Thais no longer recognised Ho Chi Minh as the leader of an independence nationalist movement, but considered him a partner in the Communist aggressive plan.

To combat this immediate threat to Thailand's sovereignty, Phibun sought the assistance of the Anglo-American power, or what he called the "traditional friendship of the world."[3] In October, 1948 a Thai purchasing mission was dispatched to Britain in search of needed products and military equipment.[4] In March , 1949 it was reported that "Siam has been reassured of material aid from Britain to meet the rising Communist threat."[5] However, Britain, preoccupied with a most expensive anti-Communist operation in Malaya, was by no means in a position to render substantial aid to Thailand. The United

---

1. Ibid.
2. Fifield, p. 250.
3. The Straits Times, 12 April, 1948. It is noteworthy that Thailand, due to her past experience with France, seldom expected any French assistance. Because of the old conflicts, coupled with France's threat to veto Thailand's U.N. membership after the war, the animosity was re-enforced and Thailand continued to give aid to the anti-French movements in Indochina. Only fear of powerful China prompted Thailand to cancel aid to Ho Chi Minh. The Thais' mistrust of the French proved unexaggerated when France under General de Gaulle became an obstructive partner in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation.
4. The Times, 6 October, 1948.
5. The Statesman, 18 March, 1949.

States, meanwhile, was too involved in the Chinese affair to respond to the Thais' plea for assistance. Many people accused Phibun of exploiting the Communist issue for his political aims. "Neutral observers," it was stated, "concluded last May that the growth of Communism in Siam had been exaggerated, that the soil was somewhat uncongenial."[1] Phibun, understandably, was troubled by what he considered the lack of awareness about the menace of Communism in Southeast Asia. In June, 1949, in an interview with Christopher Buckley of The Daily Telegraph, Phibun again pleaded for urgent co-operation between East and West to counter the growing Communist danger. He said Thailand would endorse a security pact against aggression similar to NATO. This alliance, he proposed, should include all countries in Southeast Asia "from the Himalayas to the Chinese Sea."[2] He was reported to have said:

> A line against a gression should be taken now. It is unnecessary to wait until the troubles in Indonesia and Indochina are settled. These are basically local problems, not problems on the world plane. We cannot afford to wait for their solution. On the one hand, if such a defensive pact were formed, it might itself expedite agreement.[3]

The fall of China into Communism in late 1949 was a turning point in Asian history. In February, 1950 Phillip C. Jessup, the American Ambassador-at-large, arrived in Bangkok to discuss the Asian crisis with American ambassadors in the Far East. The Americans

---

1. The Statesman, 30 March, 1949.
2. The Daily Telegraph, 1 June, 1949.
3. Ibid.

were alarmed by the Communist expansion into Southeast Asia and attempted to find a solution to halt aggression. "They were not optimistic. The Communists were credited with having a 'dynamic timetable' to bring Southeast Asia under their control. The small countries in the region were compared to a line of dominoes which would topple should anyone of them fall to the impending 'co-ordinated attack'."[1] Mr. Jessup also conferred with Prime Minister Phibun and other Thai leaders, and asked Thailand to grant recognition to the Bao Dai regime. The Thais reluctantly agreed.[2] Shortly after the departure of Ambassador Jessup, President Truman consented to give Thailand ten million dollars worth of military assistance.[3] On 28 February Phibun announced Thailand's recognition of Bao Dai and of the newly created Laotian and Cambodian governments. These actions caused consternation among the Communists and neutralists as well as the government opposition. Thailand, it was charged, had become an American satellite.[4]

---

1. Frank C. Darling, Thailand and the United States, Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1965, pp. 69-70.

2. Thailand's recognition of Emperor Bao Dai's Government caused the resignation of Pote Sarasin, the Foreign Minister. Pote believed that Bao Dai did not have the support of the Vietnamese people, and opposed the recognition.

3. Darling, p. 70.

4. Donald E. Nuechterlein, Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1965, p. 107.

The outbreak of war in Korea gave Field Marshal Phibun an opportunity to demonstrate Thailand's readiness to participate in the joint defence of Asia. Thailand was among the first countries to respond to the American appeal for concerted action in Korea. In addition to Phibun's decision to send several thousand troops to join the United Nations forces, Thailand offered twenty thousand tons of rice for Korean relief.[1] The United States likewise demonstrated the American willingness to assist Thailand against Communism. Three months after the North Korean invasion of the Republic of Korea, Thailand and the United States concluded the Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement. In October, 1950 the Military Assistance Agreement was signed by the two allies.

Despite the closer tie between Thailand and the United States, the Americans appeared unready to commit themselves to the defence of Southeast Asia. An American scholar comments that "the United States was not prepared, even after the outbreak of the Korean War, to give Thailand a military guarantee, although Phibun and other Thai leaders wanted such assurance,"[2] Great Britain, it appeared, was waiting for the American initiative.

Undoubtedly, this hesitation on the part of the Anglo-American power to giving Thailand a more concrete assurance against Communist danger disturbed Prime Minister Phibun. "We who live under the immediate threat," he said, "feel that Western policies are...

---

1. Ibid., p. 108.

2. Ibid., p. 109.

tragically ignoring the impending crisis in Southeast Asia."[1] Phibun's anxiety was sympathised with by several observers. Mr. Stewart Alsop who had a long discussion with Khuang and Phibun voiced a stern warning in favour of an all-out Western commitment to the defence of Thailand. "If nothing is done to stop the Communist wave," he said, "it is wholely predictable that this small, gay country will soon be gay no longer."[2] Alsop also added:

> The conclusion is obvious. Siam will cave in if pressure is exerted from one side, and if, as in 1941, there is a vacuum on the other side. Something very likely a vacuum now exists. The question is how to fill it.
>
> Siam has an army of 30,000 reasonably good infantrymen, sufficient to assure at least the internal security of the country, except that they are badly armed. Siam is looking for arms...
>
> Yet small arms alone are not enough to bring the lesson home, either here or elsewhere. What is needed above all is a firm, clear American policy, which will convince Southeast Asia first, that the United States is not interested in restoring colonialism in Asia, second, that the United States is nevertheless not prepared to witness the substitution of a Communist imperialism for a European imperialism, and third, the United States is a power to be reckoned with.[3]

While American Southeast Asian policy was being formulated, Moscow and Peking intensified their propaganda attack on Thailand. Efforts were made to attract dissident groups, particularly left-wing

---

1. The South China Morning Post, 1 September, 1949.
2. The New York Herald Tribune, 20 July, 1949.
3. The New York Herald Tribune, 24 July, 1949.

journalists and teachers into the Communist side. In March, 1950 the Phibun government charged the Communists with conducting a subversive campaign to create dissention among the Buddhist priests.[1] In July, 1951 Phibun said that a cease-fire in Korea would not bring lasting peace or halt the Communists from dominating the rice fields of Southeast Asia. Thailand, he said, would be a prime target of the Chinese invasion.[2] Peking in turn called Field Marshal Phibun a collaborator with "the American imperialists."[3] "Since he seized power by a coup d'etat in November, 1947," it said, "the Thailand fascist bloc has been in a state of constant political crisis."[4] In 1952 a strong anti-Communist legislation was passed by the Thai Assembly. This measure, called the Un-Thai Activities Act of 1952, gave the government overwhelming power in dealing with any person associated with Communist organisation.[5]

Phibun's fear of Communist expansion appeared justified. In January, 1953 Peking announced the formation of a Thai Autonomous People's Republic in Yunnan. In the spring of 1953 the Viet Minh forces invaded Laos and the so-called Free Laotian Government was established. In December the Communists captured the Laotian town of Takhek opposite Thailand's northeastern frontier. In early 1954

---

1. The New York Herald Tribune, 12 March, 1950.
2. The New York Times, 14 July, 1951.
3. The New China News Agency, 10 July, 1951
4. Ibid.
5. For details of this act, see G. William Skinner, Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1957, p. 335.

they were heading for Luang Prabang, the capital of Laos. In April, Ho Chi Minh's troops invaded Cambodia. Thailand responded to this imminent threat by putting nine border provinces under a state of emergency. Army and Police troops were rushed to strengthen the frontier.[1] It called for more assistance from the United States. Prince Wan, the Thai permanent representative to the United Nations, asked the Security Council to investigate the crisis. He requested the United Nations Peace Observation Commission to provide an on-the-scene inspection under the Uniting for Peace Resolution:

> In bringing this situation to the attention of the Council my Government is prompted by the desire not only to assure the safety and well-being of our nation, but to fulfill faithfully our duty as a loyal member of the United Nations. No responsible government anxious to preserve the security of its own country can remain impassive when forces of unrest are active near its frontiers...
>
> In setting up the Peace Observation Commission, the General Assembly provided that the Commission was to "observe and report on the situation in any area where there exists international tension, the continuation of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security." The underlying idea of the proposal was that the Commission should be used wherever there is an area of tension. It has been the hope of the authors of the proposal that the observers would function as a "peace patrol" ready to deal with problems anywhere in the world where there is a real state of tension and a real danger of international conflict. These observers should represent the calm and impartial judgment of the world community in a troubled and disturbed area where detachment and the impartiality and calm judgment are necessary. Under this concept a request for such observation should really be a matter of more or less routine procedure. It should not be taken as an unfriendly

1. Fifield, p. 251.

> gesture by one state against another state. It involves no imputation of blame or censure against any party.[1]

Thailand's proposal was vetoed by the Soviet Union, the support of all other members of the Security Council notwithstanding.[2] The Thai delegation withheld its appeal to the General Assembly pending the outcome of a big power conference which was in progress at Geneva simultaneously.[3] Knowing the present shortcomings of the United Nations and having dramatised the seriousness of Communist threat to Thailand, the Thais did not press its case in the General Assembly.

As the defeat of the French in Viet Nam became increasingly imminent, the United States began to pay serious attention to the Thai and Filipino idea of establishing a defence organisation in Southeast Asia.[4] In April, 1954 President Eisenhower wrote a letter

---

1. Government of Thailand, Royal Thai Embassy, "Statement of H.R.H. Prince Wan Waithayakorn, Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Security Council on Indochina," Thai News Bulletin, June 1954, London.
2. Whereas Lebanon abstained, the United Kingdom, France, China, the United States, Denmark, Brazil, and Turkey were in favour.
3. In this conjunction, Prince Wan stated:
   > In our view this request cannot and will not under any circumstances produce any detrimental effects upon the efforts which are being and have already been exerted for some time but so far have yielded no solution. It is hardly necessary for me to point out that these efforts are independent of, and by their very nature different from, my request of the Organisation. The successful conclusion of efforts made elsewhere may therefore be reached irrespective of whether or not this particular request is considered by the United Nations. On the contrary, and in the unfortunate event of a failure of the above efforts the consideration of the United Nations of this dangerous situation and the provision of impartial observation will have the salutary effect of preventing the situation from deteriorating and helping to avoid the extension of conflict and bloodshed.

   Government of Thailand, Statement of Prince Wan, op. cit.
4. Donald E. Nuechterlein, "Thailand and SEATO: A Ten-Year Appraisal," Asian Survey, Vol.4, No. 12, December, 1964, p. 1174.

to Prime Minister Churchill expressing his deep concern over the deteriorating situation in Indochina and sought the British support in the defence of Southeast Asia:

> ...I fear that the French cannot alone see the things through, this despite the very substantial assistance in money and material we are giving them. It is no solution simply to urge the French to intensify their efforts. And if they do not see it through and Indochina passed into the hands of the Communists the ultimate effort on our and your global strategic position with the consequent shift in the power ratios throughout Asia and the Pacific could be disastrous and I know, unacceptable to you and me...This has led us to the hard conclusion that the situation in Southeast Asia requires us urgently to take serious and far-reaching decisions...
>
> If I may refer again to history, we failed to halt Hirohito, Mussolini, and Hitler by not acting in unity and in time. That marked the beginning of many years of stark tragedy and desperate peril. May it not be that our nations have learned something from that lesson?[1]

With the collapse of the French at Dien Bien Phu in sight, and the Geneva Conference on Indochina beginning, President Eisenhower wrote to General Gruenther at NATO. In this letter the American President expressed his dismay of the French policy in Indochina and gave the outline of his plan for the would-be Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation:

> Dear Al:
>
> ...
>
> As you know, you and I started more than three years ago trying to convince the French that they could not win the Indo-China war and particularly could not get real American support in that region unless they would unequivocally pledge independence to the Associated States upon the achievement of military victory. Along with this - indeed as a corollary to it - this Administration has been arguing that no Western power can go to Asia militarily, except as one of a concert of powers, which concert must include local Asiatic peoples.

---

1. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change 1953-1956, Heinemann, London, 1963, pp. 346-347.

> To contemplate anything else is to lay ourselves open to the charge of imperialism and colonialism or - at the very least - of rejectionable paternalism. Even, therefore, if we could by some sudden stroke assure the saving of Dien Bien Phu garrison, I think that under the conditions proposed by the French the free world would lose more than it would gain...Consequently, we have had to stand by while the tactical situation has grown worse and worse. Now, unless there should be a sudden development of discouragement on the part of the enemy, it looks as if Dien Bien Phu could scarcely survive...
>
> In any event, I do believe as follows:
> (a) That the loss of Dien Bien Phu does not necessarily mean the loss of the Indo-China War.
> (b) The heroic exploits of the French garrison (which are all the more wonderful in view of the weak support they have had from Paris) should be glorified and extolled as indicative of the French character and determination.
> (c) We should all (United States, France, Thailand, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, et al) begin conferring at once on means of successfully stopping the Communist advance in Southeast Asia.
> (d) The plan should include the use of the bulk of the French Army in Indo-China.
> (e) The plan should assure freedom of political action to Indo-China promptly upon attainment of victory.
> (f) Additional ground forces should come from Asiatic and European troops already in the region.
> (g) The general security and peaceful purposes and aims of such a concert of nations should be announced publicly - as in NATO. Then possibly we wouldn't have to fight.
>
> D.E.[1]

Hence, in the spring of 1954 Mr. John Foster Dulles, the United States Secretary of State, asked the Thai Ambassador to Washington whether Thailand would join a Southeast Asia defence pact. Within only two days, Ambassador Pote Sarasin gave a reply that the government of Thailand would accept the collective military alliance "unconditionally."[2] This rapid decision was made despite some

---

1. Ibid., pp. 352-353.

2. Nuechterlein, The Struggle for Southeast Asia, p. 114.

reservation on the part of a few Thai leaders.[1] The all prevailing rationale underlying the Thais' determination to join SEATO, also known as the Manila Pact, on 8 September, 1954 was that Thailand did not wish to be left alone fighting Communism. The experience of the Japanese invasion in the Second World War was still fresh in the minds of Phibun and his colleagues. It had taught the Thais that superior force, when it could be mustered, was the most effective means to deter aggression. As Prince Wan put it, "for the preservation of peace and security Thailand has tried many policies in the past, such as those of neutrality and of non-aggression treaties, but found that they did not work, nor can any reason be seen why they should work now."[2]

Before the meeting of the foreign ministers of eight countries establishing the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation was to take place at Manila, Philippines on 6 September, 1954, it was known that Thailand desired a firm commitment and immediate action from SEATO members. The Thai Foreign Minister, Prince Wan Waithayakorn, said in a press interview on 26 August that Thailand would seek the similar guarantee to the defence of Southeast Asia as that of NATO, namely, that a violation on any of the SEATO members would be regarded as aggression on all its partners:

---

1. Ibid.
2. Speech of Prince Wan Waithayakorn, The Signing of the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty, the Protocol of the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty and the Pacific Charter, p. 36, cited in Fifield, p. 231.

> The situation in Indochina is uncertain. Thailand is next in line of Communist expansion. It is thus our duty to defend ourselves militarily and economically. In doing so we need assistance from our friends, the United States, for example...Thailand needs as strong a pact as possible. If other countries agree, we want a NATO-type of arrangement which considers an aggression on one member as aggression on the others. We wish to have a firm commitment, militarily and economically. If this is not feasible we would like to have an ANZUS-type of agreement in the similar manner that United States concluded with Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines.[1]

The Thai government obtained less than it had expected. The SEATO treaty does not bind its members to an automatic reprisal against armed aggression on any of its partners. It is said that the United States, the most powerful supporter of the organisation, "was not prepared to give the same guarantee to the SEATO nations that it did to the NATO nations, probably because it feared that the Senate might refuse to ratify the treaty that committed the United States to treat an attack on any member of the treaty as an attack on itself."[2] Hence the agreement requires that in the event of an armed aggression on its member(s) each party will "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes."[3] And that in the event of threat or "situation which might endanger the peace of the area, the Parties shall consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defence."[4] Nevertheless, Thailand was given verbal assurance which

---

1. Government of Thailand, Ratthasapha san (Parliamentary Gazette), Vol. 2, No.37, 7 September, 1954, pp. 78-81, translated by the writer.
2. Nuechterlein, The Struggle for Southeast Asia, p. 116.
3. The Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty and the Pacific Charter, Article IV (1).
4. Ibid., Article IV (2).

"tended to increase the Phibun government's confidence in the American commitment."[1] Vice-President Garcia of the Philippines was said to have disclosed that the United States had promised "to act immediately in case of Communist aggression against any member."[2] The Thai government of Field Marshal Phibun could also satisfy itself with the fact that Bangkok was chosen as the site of SEATO Headquarters and that a Thai, Pote Sarasin, was elected the first Secretary General of the Organisation. By and large, the Phibun government could justifiably claim success, at least for the time being, in its search for Thailand's security. Modelski states that Thailand's joining the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty was a result of "a long period of skilful diplomatic activity..."[3]

III. Politics of Violence

The Coup d'Etat Group which seized power for Field Marshal Phibun in 1947 and 1948 was composed almost exclusively of men of the Army. Out of thirty-six coup makers, thirty-three were Army officers, two Air Force officers and one Police officer.[4] The Navy did not take part in these occasions, although it was known that it did not oppose the coup. Despite the Navy's claim

---

1. Nuechterlein, The Struggle for Southeast Asia, p. 116.

2. George Modelski (ed.), SEATO: Six Studies, The Australian National University, Melbourne, 1962, p. 92, citing The Bangkok Post, 10 September, 1954.

3. Ibid., p. 88.

4. David A. Wilson, Politics in Thailand, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1962, p. 177.

that it always kept "neutral" in politics,[1] naval officers, Luang Sinthu Songkhramchai, Luang Supha Chalasai, and Luang Thamrong Nawasawat, for instance, had been active participants in Thailand's political games since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932. The absence of the Navy from the 1947 and 1948 episodes may be due partly to its allegiance, however loose, to the ousted governments. The Pridi-dominated regime of 1947 had the clear backin of some naval elements and was headed by Luang Thamrong, an admiral. The Khuang Aphaiwong Administration, though lacking formal identification with the Navy, was not without the support of the admirals. Many of Khuang's loyal friends and associates were naval officers.[2]

The overthrow of Thamrong and Khuang undoubtedly antagonised the Navy. The Coup d'Etat Group's monopoly of power further aggravated the situation. As in most countries, the Thai Army and Navy were serious rivals and their relationship was by no means cordial. On 27 February, 1949 this uneasy rivalry exploded into an open hostility. An element of the Navy staged a coup d'etat against the Army-dominated government. At the instigation of some Free Thai politicians, several discontented units of the Navy attempted to oust the Phibun Songkhram regime. A Times observer's report from Thailand described the event as follows:

---

1. Coast, p. 46.
2. There were three naval officers in the Khuang Cabinet of November, 1948. In his wartime government of August, 1944 six naval officers held ministerial portfolios.

> Fighting between Siamese naval and army forces broke out in the main street of Bangkok at night and dawn. Armored vehicles manned by soldiers and anti-tank guns manned by marines went into action against one another. By noon the fighting had died down.
>
> The outbreak occurred soon after the group had seized Bangkok wireless station. This group announced over the wireless that Phibun, the Prime Minister, and his Cabinet had resigned and named as his successor Nai Direk, a former Ambassador in London and a member of the wartime Free Thai movement.
>
> The wireless closed down while this announcement was being made, and when broadcasting was resumed it was stated that Phibun was still Prime Minister and that the earlier announcement had not been authorised.
>
> Phibun announced over the radio that prompted action had "totally smashed" a plot to overthrow his Government.[1]

The battle lasted twelve hours. In consequence, about one hundred servicemen were killed.[2] There were forty-eight arrests. This abortive coup was officially explained as the result of a "misunderstanding" between the Army and the Navy.[3] A committee was formed to investigate into the causes of "bad feeling" between the two fighting forces.[4]

It appeared, nevertheless, that Pridi was the key figure behind the rebellion. Disguised as naval officers, Pridi's followers seized the Royal Palace near the Naval Headquarters. They subsequently occupied the radio station. They were backed by a small element of the Navy and some of Pridi's old naval friends.

---

1. The Times, 28 February, 1949.
2. The Straits Times, 2 March, 1949.
3. The Straits Times, 1 March, 1949.
4. The Times, 2 March, 1949.

In the name of the Navy, the rebels broadcasted the overthrow of Phibun. Other naval forces then joined in against the government and fighting spread.[1] A decisive factor, which is said to have contributed to the defeat of the coup, was the failure of Pridi's men to capture the inevitable tank corps: "...Phibun's supporters raced to the tank and armoured-car headquarters. They reached this key place just ahead of the main body of plotters and mobilised the tanks for the government."[2] Phibun promptly intervened in person and soldiers and sailors were persuaded to return to their barracks.[3] The coup failed. Pridi, alleged to have led the rebels himself,[4] fled into exile once again. (He is last reported to be residing in Peking.)[5]

The Free Thai-Navy coup d'etat (known in Thailand as Khabot wang luang or the "Royal Palace Rebellion") marked the beginning of violent purges and attempted coups in postwar Thai politics. Three days after the rebellion, Police Colonel Banjongsak Chippensuk, former head of the Security Police, was shot dead "resisting arrest."[6] An old Pridi associate, Major Phon Intharathat, was also shot dead while "cutting communication wires."[7] On 4 March four other Pridi

---

1. Ibid.
2. Coast, p. 52.
3. The Times, 2 March, 1949.
4. Coast, p. 52.
5. Following Phibun's 1947 coup, Pridi was helped by the British and American authorities to escape to Singapore. In 1949, before the Communist victory, he moved to Shanghai. There he made an application for an American visa. It was turned down in the last minute.
6. The Straits Times, 2 March, 1949.
7. Ibid.

friends and exministers, Thong-In-Phuriphat, Thongplew Cholaphum, Jamlong Daowruang, and Thawin Udon were killed while in police custody. It was alleged that the four politicians were "attempting to escape from their escorts after being arrested on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the Government."[1] Thereafter, more arrests were made of Pridi's followers or former associates. Attempts were made on the lives of other individuals, most of whom having some connexion either with Pridi or the Free Thais. It was later (after the overthrow of Phibun in 1957) disclosed that most of these actions were organised by Police General Phao Sriyanon, a leader of the Coup d Etat Group, who in August, 1949 became head of the Suppression Division of the Police as well as Deputy Director General of the Police.

Dissatisfied factions in the Army also plotted the overthrow of the government. In January, 1950 Major General Kaj Kajsongkhram, a leader of the 1947 coup, was charged with being involved in a coup against Phibun. He was arrested and put on board a plane to Hong Kong. It was said that "Thailand's ruling military clique had given Kaj the choice of exile or death after the police had discovered a plot to overthrow the regime."[2] In November another Army plot was discovered. As a result, seventy-six men, most of whom young staff officers in the Army, were arrested. "It was becoming obvious," said an observer, "that even Phin and Phao could not control all of the differing armed factions."[3]

---

1. The Manchester Guardian, 5 March, 1949.
2. The New York Times, 30 January, 1950.
3. Coast, p. 56.

The most serious and damaging attempt to dislodge the government by force came on 29 June, 1951 when the Navy, with the collaboration of its marines units, staged a dramatic coup d'etat. The event began in the afternoon while the American dredger Manhattan was to be transferred to the Thai government. Prime Minister Phibun, who presided over the ceremony, was taken at gun-point by a naval commander and several sailors armed with machine guns. He was subsequently held hostage at the rebels' headquarters, the destroyer H.S.Sri Ayuthya. Phibun was compelled to make a broadcast asking the government to"seek an agreement" with the rebels.[1]

Fighting broke out between the Army, the Police, and the Air Force loyal to the government on the one side, and the Navy and the Marines on the other. At the beginning, due to its excellent location and superior Marines units, the struggle went well for the rebels. But when Army troops from near-by provinces closed in and, unexpectedly, the Marines forces at Sattahip garrison refused to join the rebellion, the Navy found itself fighting a losing battle. The Navy's most serious setback came at the hands of the Air Force's well-trained pilots. Air bombardment finally sunk the 2,265-ton Sri Ayuthya and the Navy capitulated. Before ordering the air strike against the Sri Ayuthya, the Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force, Air Marshal Fuen Rithakhani, broadcasted a message asking the Prime Minister who was still on board to "sacrifice for the country." The message reads:

---

1. Khana ku chat (The Patriots), Prakat khana ku chat chabab thi sibkao (Announcement No. 19), 29 June, 1951.

To Excellency the Field Marshal:

> This is a serious and dangerous situation. It has been executed according to the plan we have known for quite some time. That is to destroy the Constitution of the Kingdom - surely an act of treason. As regard to your broadcast plea (for compromise), we realise that you are acting under threat and have to yield to this minority group of the Navy who is probably under Communist instigation.
>
> This illegal action without due regard to law and order cannot be forgiven. We, therefore, beg of you to sacrifice for law and country. (We consider) the offer for negotiation null because the rebels did not agree to release you. We ask Your Excellency to sacrifice so as to permit us to bring to heel these traitors and their crime against the people.
>
> Air Marshal Fuen R. Rithakhani,
> Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force,
> Don Muang Air Base[1]

Phibun survived the air attack and returned safely to his post.[2] The decision to sink the Sri Ayuthya nevertheless demonstrated quite clearly the dispensability of the Field Marshal[3] (as he is called by most Thais). The revolt became the most violent struggle for power in modern Thai history. Sixty-eight persons were reported

---

1. Government of Thailand, Royal Thai Air Force, Prakat korngthap akat chabab thi paet (Announcement No.8), 29 June, 1948, translated by the writer.

2. Two sailors helped him across the Jao Phraya River amidst fierce fighting. Thereafter, Admiral Sinthu, the Navy Commander-in-Chief, personally escorted Phibun to the Government House.

3. However, after the event the Prime Minister was reported to have said that "the Government had been expecting a navy coup attempt for some time", and that "he had ordered his top subordinates in advance not to consider his safety in suppressing a revolt that might involve his kidnapping." The New York Times, 8 July, 1951.

killed and 1,100 wounded.[1] There was no report on the substantial losses of public and private properties.

Observers saw the event as the result of personal rivalry between Pridi and Phibun. The Prime Minister himself suggested a possible link between the Navy rebels and Pridi's supporters. He said that the Navy regarded Pridi as "the best politician."[2] "Captain Anond Puntharikapa, commander of the ship on which I was imprisoned," added Phibun, "also commanded the ship that helped Pridi to escape in 1947."[3] Although Police General Phao accused Pridi of having contacts with the Communists, Phibun dismissed any allegation connecting the attempted coup with Communism.[4] It was, nevertheless, feared that General Phao might use the opportunity to launch a severe measure against the oppositions and several of Thailand's well-wishers appealed for moderation on the part of the victors:

> It is to be hoped that there will not be stringent reprisals. Siam has a happy tradition of tolerance and saving levity in its politics. The present conspirators did not kill Pibul Songkhram when they had him at their mercy; he should not kill them...it is a fair supposition that Pridi was concerned in the present plot. He and Phibun have fought each other for nearly twenty years in Siamese politics. They have been a kind of oriental Gladstone and Disraeli. First one has been in, then the other, and though they have gone through the forms of making revolutions they have shown a rare civilisation in using their power with tact and moderation. In consequence Siam has been a happy country. Pibul has now the responsibility for seeing that this honourable tradition is continued, even in the moment of strain such as the present.[5]

---

1. The New York Times, 30 November, 1951.
2. The New York Times, 8 July, 1951.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. The Manchester Guardian, 2 July, 1951.

The purge following the abortive naval coup was indeed a mild affair, in view of the seriousness of the incident. Though 800 Navy men including 200 officers were in custody,[1] most of them were soon released. Ten admirals including Admiral Sinthu, the Naval Commander-in-Chief, were forced into retirement.[2] There was no execution or political repression. Yet the coup was violent enough to warrant harsh comments from foreign writers. "It served as a sobering reminder," states Nuechterlein, "to those who assumed that Thais are generous towards opponents that when large political issues are at stake, they are not unlike other peoples in their willingness to spill blood."[3] Consequently, the Navy was stripped of power and ceased to be a main countervailing force of the Army. Its Marines Regiment, 4,500 men in strength, was "reorganised" almost to the point of extinction. Field Marshal Phibun gave the government's reasons for restructuring the Navy as follows:

> There is no ground for liquidating the Navy, but it must restrict itself to navy functions on sea...We are reducing the marines so they will perform only guard duties. Our Navy does not need men to fight on land. They had even gone to the point where they were organising the cavalry.[4]

Evidently Thai power politics seemed to have exhibited an increasing trend toward the use of violence by almost all contending groups. John Coast, a keen observer of the Thai scene, remarked in

---

1. The New York Times, 8 July, 1951.
2. The Times, 5 July, 1951.
3. Nuechterlein, The Struggle for Southeast Asia, p. 61.
4. The New York Times, 8 July, 1951.

1953 that "Whereas, before, Siam had been famous for the non-violence of her political changes, now several hundred innocent civilians were apt to suffer deaths or wounds every time her responsible leaders sought to change the government. The political development of Siam since this most recent attempted coup suggested that the situation has deteriorated."[1] This observation, though by no means applicable to the stable situation of the 1960's, was exceedingly relevant to the turbulent years of the 1950's. During this time, power fluctuated considerably, and many power blocs were in the political arena. Besides the Army there were Pridi's Free Thais, the Air Force, the Navy and the Police, all having in their arsenals instruments of terror. Khuang's failure to suppress the Army's intimidation in 1948 brought the end of parliamentary and constitutional processes. The Democrats' refusal to take part in the Phibun Cabinet and their retreat into the background eliminated further possible peaceful compromise among the political elites. The Coup d'Etat Group was thus left alone in supremacy without any balancing "representations" by other power blocs. This situation was aggravated by the police brutality and General Phao's personality. The Police General, though extremely able administrator, had no political aptitude. His knowledge and experience in politics were limited,[2] and his relationship with the press was far from cordial.

---

1. Coast, p. 57.

2. Although General Phao had been Phibun's aide-de-camp, since 1938 his duties had been largely military and administrative. He had never been educated abroad and he seldom employed political advisors.

Phao was known for his harsh temperament and an inclination towards violence.[1] His tactlessness and oppressive methods were to a large extent responsible for the government's unpopularity. He thus became the main target of hatred and opposition against the regime.

A deeper root of conflicts, however, lies in the structure of Thai political power. The fact that the circle of Thai political activities is small[2] and the majority of the public is politically passive, if not altogether indifferent, creates a situation where conflicts are usually sharp and often highly personal. After the overthrow of the monarchy in 1932 and especially after the royalist attempted counter-coup in 1933, the Thai political scene was occupied exclusively by the Promoters. Their close personal relationships and their well-known "oath of mutual allegiance" were to a large extent the cause of the relatively non-violent jugglings for political supremacy during the pre-war years. Even in 1944 when Field Marshal Phibun was eased out of power to make way for a civilian government, it was the personal ties between the leaders that kept the Army from staging a rebellion. Political monopoly by the Promoters, however, came to an end after the war.

---

1. See Chit Wiphatthawat, Phao saraphab (Phao Confesses), Phrae Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1960, pp. 205-449.
2. David Wilson (1962:60) estimates that there ware "perhaps 10-15 persons who do or could dominate the ruling class and the country as a whole by manipulating the various political forces." These men constitute the uppermost echelon which is composed mainly of faction leaders and highly influential individuals. The analysis of the ruling circle given in this thesis, however, embraces the lower level and thus larger number of the power elites. It includes faction leaders, powerful individuals as well as important members of different factions.

After the Second World War many new personalities entered the political arena. Different factions emerged among the Promoters,[1] and they consolidated themselves under different leadership. During this period (1944-1951), five major factions could be recognised: the Pridi faction, the Phibun faction, and the Khuang faction - relating one way or the other to the Promoters, the Phin faction(a relative new-comer, largely through Army channels) and the Navy faction.

---

1. The terms faction, group, and clique employed herein are interchangeable and subject only to literary style. No attempt is made to distinguish them in terms of size, function or component. Likewise, the term "ruling circle" simply implies "those in power." They can be either Cabinet members, troop commanders, professors, or assemblymen. Any attempt at confining the Thai "ruling circle" within the membership of the Cabinet, or to analyse Thai politics on the basis of the shifts in Cabinet membership (as indicated by Riggs: 1965: 212-241) is an oversimplification; indeed, it distorts the whole picture of Thai politics. As a matter of fact, in view of the history of Thai military politics, certain posts in the armed forces are far more significant than most Cabinet portfolios. The Commander of the First Army Area, Commander of the First Army Regiment, Commander of the First Infantry Battalion (King's Guards), all of whom station in the Bangkok area, and Commander of the Don Muang Air Base, for example, were key men who could make a coup succeed or fail. Thus, they wield more political power and influence than, say, the Minister of Education or Minister of Finance. Prime Ministers Sarit and Thanom began their rise to prominence as Commanders of the First Infantry Battalion. General Praphat, the number-two man in the present regime, also began his political "fortune" in the same Battalion. Another most crucial post is the Police Director General, which is not a Cabinet portfolio. In August, 1957, when forced by the Sarit group to relinquish his posts of Minister of Interior and Police Director General, General Phao announced that he would resign from the Interior Minister but keep his post of Police Director General.

Of the three factions dominated by the Promoters, two, the Pridi and Phibun groups, were the frontrunners. Their first appearance came to notice after the Royalist counter-coup of 1933. Though these groups once allied themselves against the royalist and the conservative, they later became rivals. With their mutual enemies (Colonel Song, Prince Boworadet, Phaya Mano) out of the arena, they began to compete for higher stakes. Nevertheless, during the early stage of the split, there still remained a considerable degree of mutual co-operation among them. But with the Japanese intervention and wartime crises, they became antagonists, irrevocably.

The last faction of the Promoters was under Khuang Aphaiwong's leadership. Khuang, an engineer turned politician, was considered a junior Promoter. He was educated in Paris in the 1920's along with Phibun, Pridi and others, and so came to join the plot against the monarchy despite his good relationship with the princes. Khuang did not take part in the planning stage of the 1932 coup d'etat and was considered somewhat of an outsider.[1] He was given a relatively minor role during the night of the revolution.[2] A "happy-go-lucky" sort of person (he had an excellent sense of humour), he was not entirely trusted by the inner group, composing of Pridi, Thansanai, Tua, and Phibun. But after 1933 he gradually acquired a reputation as an excellent debater, a man of conciliation, and a

---

1. Khuang Aphaiwong, Kantorsu khorng khaphajao (My Struggle), Pramuansan Press, Bangkok, 1958, pp. 16-17.

2. His assignment was to cut off the tele-communications system of Bangkok; a job which he almost failed to accomplish.

"one-hundred per cent democrat."[1] Largely through the Assembly, and with his conciliatory quality, Khuang gradually emerged as a leader. Yet even until 1946, Khuang was still regarded as a Pridi follower.[2] When Phibun was ousted from power in 1944, and was reported to have been plotting an Army coup, it was Khuang who was sent by Pridi to negotiate with the Field Marshal.[3] Because of Pridi's support Khuang was able to assume the prime ministership, first in August 1944 and, again, in January 1946. Following the promulgation of the 1946 constitution, however, Khuang broke with Pridi. During and after the election of 1946, they became bitter antagonists.[4] Thereafter, Khuang quickly consolidated his own group as an opposition to Pridi. Thus emerged another faction from among the Promoters.

A more recent faction, that came into being at this time, was formed before 1947. It was under General Phin Chunnahawan's leadership. Phin, a career Army officer, was Phibun's subordinate and classmate.[5] He was the deputy commander of the Northeastern Army during the Franco-Thai conflict of 1941 and was considered

---

1. Withet Korani, p. 220.
2. Kiat, pp. 7-9.
3. Jarun, pp. 267-270.
4. For this episode see Kiat, pp. 19-45.
5. Phin narrowly missed an opportunity to become a member of the Promoters because of his inability to attend one of Phibun's private parties. Sri Phanom, Sibsorng jormphon thai (Thailand's Twelve Field Marshals), Ruamsan Press, Bangkok, 1963, pp. 78-79.

an able officer.[1] Phin was known for his admiration for Phibun. Largely due to his talent[2] and seniority, both in rank and age, Phin was able to command the respect of other officers. When Phibun was ousted and the Army degraded at the end of the Second World War, General Phin became the rallying point of the disgruntled military.[3] After the seizure of power by the Coup d'Etat Group in November 1947 Phin attained political prominence, mainly through the coup and his association with Phibun. Thereafter, his followers consolidated themselves into a powerful faction with Colonel Kaj and General Phao, Phin's son-in-law, as the prominent members. Nevertheless, Phin emerged as leader of a separate group because he could swing the Army to Phibun's aid and yet somehow remained independent of Phibun. His role was that of the titular figure - the "grandfather" - of the group rather than acting himself as group leader. Colonel Kaj and General Phao were the real leaders of this group.

The most recent faction, the Navy, was probably formed after the Army coup of 1947. Though this group is said to have favoured Pridi's political skills it did not look at him as the leader. The Navy faction (or rather the "Manhattan Revolt" faction) came into being as a temporary counter-measure to the Army's increasing power. It was largely a temporary faction.

---

1. Ibid., p. 95.
2. His first success came as a staff officer under Phibun's command during the Boworadet abortive coup of 1933. In the Franco-Thai conflict of 1941, Phin was hailed as a hero. When the Thais took over the Shan States of Burma in 1942, Phin was appointed Governor General, ibid., pp. 81-119.
3. Ibid., p. 123.

The Pridi faction can probably be described as the "liberal-bureaucratic-intellectual" group. They were composed originally of Pridi's admirers, men like Direk and Khuang for example. Some of Pridi's former students such as Dr. Thongplew Chonlaphum and Thong-in Phummiphat were subsequently included. Following the creation of the Free Thais, and particularly immediately after the war, the group took in the Free Thais as well as the patriotic young officials. However most of the Free Thais and the young officials did not belong to Pridi's inner group. They were merely his supporters. Some of these younger bureaucrats and "intellectuals" were trained abroad, especially in France. Many others were the product of native education and were mainly recruited from Thammasat University, where Pridi was once a rector. Several of these men were professional politicians with their homes located in Thailand's impoverished Northeast region. Despite their different backgrounds, most of them were drawn to Pridi by his humanitarian and Socialist leaning. It was also Pridi's charisma as well as his ability to reward which accounted for his considerable appeal.

The Phibun faction may be appropriately called the "politico-military" due to the fact that by this time they had become thoroughly politicised. It was made up of Phibun's old circle, consisting of trusted friends and followers in the Army (several were in the Navy) and some Promoters. These officers - General Mangkorn Phromyothi, Air Marshal Phra Wetchayan Rangsiri, General Prayoon Phamornmontri - for instance, were not men of high calibre

and (surprisingly) not very aggressive. They were largely men of Phibun's generation, and their acquaintance dated back to their school years. A large member of this faction had been involved in the revolution of 1932. Some younger men, mostly Army officers, were attached to the group after the 1947 coup d'etat. Others were drawn from the elected members of the National Assembly. Nevertheless, the inner core of the politico-military group was confined almost exclusively to Phibun's old Army comrades. Some civilian Promoter, Luang Wijit Wathakan, for example, also belonged to the inner group. As for its leader, Phibun is described as "diligent and a dreamer."[1] "Field Marshal P." observes a Thai journalist, "was generous, polite, sympathetic to others, and an ambitious man. He was very much respected by his friends...At times, he could be quiet and solemn, almost hermit like...These are the qualities which impressed most of his friends."[2]

The Khuang Aphaiwong faction may perhaps be termed the "democrat-royalist" due to its pro-monarchist and democratic leaning. Its members consisted of the old elites and some royalists, men like Leng Srisomwong, Phaya Sri Thammathibet, for example. They were joined by the Pramoj brothers (Seni and Kukrit) who became disillusioned with Pridi .[3] These men are said, often

---

1. Withet Korani, p. 113.

2. Ibid., pp. 113-114.

3. Seni Pramoj, Prachum niphon khorngM.R. Seni Pramoj (M.R. Seni Pramoj's Collected Writings), Ruamsan Press, Bangkok, 1966, pp. 134-137.

wrongly, to have been the most conservative of the Thai political factions. While they were drawn from the well-to-do, their records show that they may be the most democratic-minded people in Thailand. Kukrit,[1] for example, was generally accepted as a first-rate journalist and writer wh reas Seni was considered a "brave, conscientious, and just"[2] person. "Seni", it is said, "is a man of honour and he would fight to the death for his honour."[3] The "democrat-royalist" also maintained a strong link with some high ranking naval officers who are natural opponents of the Army.

The fourth group may perhaps be called the Army group as they were composed almost exclusively of the Army men who engineered the 1947 coup d'etat. These men were mostly the middle-level officers. With the exception of General Phin, their leader, they were relatively young men in their late forties. And save for Phao, these officers had never been close to the political circle. They were new-comers in the political struggle.

The last group was composed largely of men in the Navy. They were headed by Admiral Chali Kulakamthorn. They were drawn

---

1. In the late 1950's, however, Kukrit left the group for some unknown reason. He nevertheless maintained a loose contact with Khuang, perhaps out of mutual animosity against Phibun. Thereafter, Kukrit has operated very m uch as a freelance intellectual. He was subsequently appointed Constituent member by Field Marshal Sarit in 1959 and was named Senator by Field Marshal Thanom in 1969. His brother, Seni, continued as a prominent member of the "democrat-royalist" and succeeded Khuang as the leader of the Democrats Party in 1968.
2. Withet Korani, p. 257.
3. Ibid., p. 258.

almost exclusively from the naval units in Bangkok. Though Admiral Luang Sinthu Songkhramchai, the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, was acknowledged as their titular figure, he actually did not belong to the group. Admiral Sinthu was an old Promoter and instead was an intimate of Phibun and Khuang.[1] The Navy faction also had strong links with both Khuang and Pridi. However, the Navy faction was probably the least cohesive of all the factions.[2]

Thus, following the Second World War, until November 1947, there were at least five political groups competing against each other in the Thai political arena. They were the Free Thais, the Democrats, the Phibun party, the Coup d'Etat Group (Army), and the Navy. The Navy was a temporary power bloc which disintegrated after the unsuccessful coup. The Promoters were split irrevocably; the prominent members formed their own personal cliques, and they ceased to be a significant bloc. The entry of so many new personalities into the political contest created severe tension within the ruling circle. Although the old leaders knew each other, the absence of close personal contact between the several groups was a serious obstacle to political compromise. The old leaders, moreover, were pushed into conflict with one another by their ambitious followers. For example, Phibun and Pridi, long since friends, became bitter antagonists, partly because of the rivalry between the young Army officers and the Free Thai politicians. Gradually, other elements

---

1. He served in the Phahon, Phibun and Khuang Cabinets since 1933. After the Navy revolt of 1951, Admiral Sinthu was held responsible for unabling to stop the coup.
2. Unlike the Army, the Navy did not act in unison. Rivalry and differences within the unit were strong, due perhaps to the individualistic nature of its officer corps.

in society were also drawn, by one side or the other, into the conflicts. Hence the Air Force participated in the power struggle for the first time in 1951. The Navy no longer remained "neutral", and even attempted a coup of its own. After the collapse of the "Manhattan Revolt" (the Navy's abortive coup), 50 students from Thammasat University were arrested for having been involved in the incident.[1]

Hence, while the stage remained small there was substantial increase in the size of political factions. Since the non-democratic nature of Thai political processes did not permit a broad peaceful participation by powerful interest groups, resort to violence seems almost inevitable. It appeared that the number of the political actors had to be reduced if the Thai political drama was to be kept in peaceful working order.

Successive coups and attempted coups brought rapid advancement to some officers. After the Navy revolt, four men emerged as powerful figures. They were General Phin Chunahawan, the leader of the 1947 and 1948 coups, Air Marshal Fuen Rithakhani, the Air Force Chief who sank the Sri Ayuthya destroyer, and the most decisive man behind the suppression of the Navy coup, Police General Phao Sriyanon, the Deputy Chief of Police and General Sarit Thanarat, the Commander of the First Army, the elite Army corps in Bangkok. General Sarit was credited with dramatic personal action in the defeat of the Free Thai-Navy coup of 1949.[2]

---

1. The New York Times, 8 July, 1951.
2. Sarit is said to have led the troops in person while most of his colleagues were under the secured shelter of the Ministry of Defence.

Of the four leaders, Phin and Fuen were senior men of Phibun's generation.[1] Phin, perhaps due to his age and prime interest in business, did not have a real grip on the Army. Fuen, knowing that his Air Force was secondary to the Army, did not aspire for any unrealistic political goal. This was not the case with Phao and Sarit who were younger men with promising futures. General Phao was in control of the rapidly expanding Police force, a result of the Thai response to Communist subversion. In July, 1951 it was announced that the Police, estimated at 30,000, would be increased by 1,000 yearly for the next ten years.[2] The Police force was also known to have 50 tanks and 80 armoured cars.[3] Its Crime Suppression Division was staffed with Phao's political-minded lieutenants who were not reluctant to use the arm of the law for political, as well as personal, purposes. Sarit, a professional soldier, was in command of the powerful Bangkok-based First Army. Since the 1947 coup the Army has been strengthened considerably. In 1951, it was said to be 35,000 in strength. It was rapidly modernised, thanks largely to the American aid. In 1950 alone, Thailand received 10 million dollars worth of military equipments from the United States.[4]

Field Marshal Phibun became an uneasy figure amid the Phao, Sarit, and other minor factions. While he was a near-dictator between 1938 and 1944, Phibun emerged after the war as a moderator. He had to rely on political skills and compromise to keep himself in

---

1. Both men were promoted to the rank of Field Marshal in 1954.
2. The Straits Times, 17 July, 1951
3. Ibid.
4. The New York Herald Tribune, 5 July, 1951.

power. "The Tiger has lost his claws," circulated gossip in Bangkok.[1] The Prime Minister's uncertain position became clearer on 29 November, 1951, when a radio broadcast announced the overthrow of his government.[2] The coup group, composed of nine officers of the armed services,[3] proclaimed that Phibun had been ousted, the Constitution abrogated, and the National Assembly dissolved "because the Phibun Government had failed to deal effectively with the problems of inflation, official corruption, and communism."[4]

A few hours after the coup, Field Marshal Phibun was reinstalled as Prime Minister. Contrary to the view that the action taken was "apparently unknown to Phibun"[5] and that the new government was formed, "for Phibun, not by him,"[6] the Prime Minister actually appeared to be the key man behind the move[7] and he emerged from the coup stronger than previously. Though he no longer exercised absolute power, Phibun was widely respected by the consensus of the military party. Police General Phao, a powerful force, was known for his "complete loyalty to Phibun".[8] General Sarit, meanwhile,

---

1. The New York Times, 1 July, 1951.
2. This episode is customarily called the "Radio Coup" ("Patiwat ngiab").
3. They were Generals Phin Chunahawan, Det Detpradiyut, Sarit Thanarat, Admirals Luang Yuthasat Koson, Luang Chamnan Atthayut, Luang Sunawin Wiwat, Air Marshals Luang Choet Wutthakat, Fuen Rithakhani, and Luang Prung Prichakat.
4. The New York Times, 30 November, 1951.
5. Nuechterlein, The Struggle for Southeast Asia, p. 64.
6. Coast, p. 58.
7. There is nothing unusual about this incident. This coup de grâce was a convenient way of adjusting the composition of the ruling group, with minimum of hard feeling on the part of those who lost. The same tactic was used in 1958 when Sarit announced the overthrow of his own government in order to rid itself of undesirable Assemblymen.
8. The Times, 3 August, 1951.

had not shown a keen interest in politics, his main preoccupation being in commerce. Phibun's relatively secured position became clearer in a close scrutiny of the new Cabinet which was composed predominantly of his wartime colleagues, Luang Wijit Wathakan, Lieutenant General Mangkorn Phromyothi, Lieutenant General Phra Boriphanyuthakit, and Major General Prayoon Phamornmontri. The Prime Minister retained the most powerful position of Defence Minister.

Evidently, the main target of the coup was the Constitution, which was promptly replaced by the old 1932 provision and its government-appointed half of the legislature. The deposed constitution promulgated by the Khuang government in March, 1949, was considered "too advanced" for the country.[1] It gave the king, acting upon the advice of the Regency Council, power to appoint the members of the Upper House and is widely considered "the most democratic of all Thailand's constitutions."[2] The 1932 Constitution gave the military party the sole authority in the appointments of the "second category" Assemblymen.

In February, 1952 a general election was held whereby the Government's candidates were overwhelmingly elected. The Democrats, aware of their powerless position in face of the constitution, boycotted the election. Out of 25 ministers of the Phibun government

---

1. Coast, p. 58.

2. Pla Thang, Phak kanmuang thai (Thai Political Parties), Kawna Press, Bangkok, 1965, p. 170.

of March, 1952, 7 were civilian technocrats and 18 were military officers.[1] Prime Minister Phibun also held the positions of Minister of Defence and Minister of Culture.

The November, 1951 incident was generally regarded as a "grave setback to Thailand's democracy."[2] It also antagonised the king whose increasing power and prestige were suddenly circumscribed as a result of the coup. Many conservatives behind the Throne viewed the incident as a threat to their position, and were reminded of Phibun's dramatic suppression of the royalist revolt of 1933. It is also known that as a leader of the 1932 revolution against the monarchy, Phibun (unlike most of the Thai elite) did not share an unreserved reverence toward the king. A story illustrating the uneasy relationship between Prime Minister Phibun and King Phoumiphon, following the 1951 coup, is given as follows:

> The attitude of the King toward the November coup d'etat was of some importance to the leaders. King Poumipon had been living in Switzerland in order to finish education. When he returned to Thailand for a short visit in 1950, there was such widespread public enthusiasm for him that the military must have been impressed, and also fearful of his potential influence if he should decide to resist its growing power. Most observers believed that it was no mere coincidence that the November coup occurred only two days before the King returned to Thailand permanently to assume his full responsibilities as monarch. According to this view, the army and police, which had consolidated their power in the summer of 1951, were apprehensive about the role the young King intended to play upon his return. The King expressed his displeasure by refusing to acknowledge the new political situation for four days after his return;

---

1. Out of 18 men of the armed forces, 10 were from the Army, 3 from the Navy, 3 from the Air Force, and 2 from the Police.

2. Pla Thong, p. 198.

> during this time negotiations went on between the government and the palace. The King held one important card: the threat of non-recognition by foreign powers if he failed to approve the coup. A solution was reached, however, and the King approved of the new constitution. The regime was thereafter granted recognition by other countries. Although the King at this time was nearly powerless, his delay in granting approval of the government was seen by many as a sign that he would not in future stand completely aloof from politics.[1]

With the Democrats out of their way, the disliked constitution abolished, and the king's power curtailed, the military party was firmly in power. By this time an armed coup d'etat provided it succeeded was well-accepted by all political groups, including the civilians such as Pridi, as a practical means of changing the government. Even the court recognised the legality of this violent method of political succession. After the 1947 coup d'etat Thailand's Criminal Court, when asked to rule on the legitimacy of the government which came to power as a result of the coup, gave its verdict as follows:

> ...The Court considers it immaterial whether by law the Provisional Constitution of B.E. 2490 (1947) has the effect of abrogating the Constitution of B.E. 2489 (1946) and establishing new lawful institutions. For it is clear that the coup d'etat succeeded in overthrowing the government then in power which remains out of power up to now. At the same time all the power of the State were taken over by the persons staging the coup d'etat...the administration of the Kingdom has since been based on the Provisional Constitution of 2490 without any evidence of the government thrown out of power being able to exercise effective control over the country...In other words, the government in power and lawful control of a country may be either a government de jury or de facto. In any case it is a principle of law that no country can be left without a government at any time. <u>If after a successful coup d'etat all administration were to be held unlawful when would a country be lawfully governed?</u> To hold that it could never be lawfully governed would be

---

1. Nuechterlein, <u>The Struggle for Southeast Asia</u>, pp. 63-64.

dangerous legalism giving rise to unimaginable complications.[1]

After the "silent coup" of November, 1951 the Supreme (Dika) Court reaffirmed the legitimacy of a successful coup d'etat:

> The overthrow of a previous government and establisment of a new government by the use of force is perhaps illegal in the beginning until the people are willing to accept and respect it. When it is a government in fact, which means that the people have been willing to accept and respect it, any person who attempts by rebellion to overthrow that government violates the criminal law.[2]

The peaceful period between 1952-1955 saw the consolidation of power of Police General Phao and General Sarit. In mid-1954 the Police was reported to number 40,000 men.[3] The Army, formerly raised to 45,000 men, was 65,000 in strength.[4] The two men, close friends and equal in age, became contending heirs to Field Marshal Phibun, who, to almost everyone's astonishment, appeared in full control of all the rival parties. The senior General Phin and Air Marshal Fuen, rallied themselves behind the Prime Minister. Admiral Luang Yuthasat Koson, the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, owed his prominance to Phibun. Thus, by May, 1955 the Prime Minister felt confident enough to leave the country for around-the-world

---

1. Government of Thailand, Court of Criminal Cases, Judgement in the Regicide Case, p. 11, cited in Walter F. Vella, The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955, pp. 392-393, emphasis added.

2. Government of Thailand, Ministry of Justice, Decision of the Dika, B.E. 2495 (1952), 1153-1154/95, Bangkok, 1953, p.1, cited in Wilson, Politics, p. 269.

3. The Christian Science Monitor, 13 July, 1954.

4. Ibid.

goodwill tour. The working democratic models of the United States and Great Britain seemed to have made an enormous impression on the Field Marshal. In the United States Phibun declared that "the spirit of freedom is strong among the Thai people."[1] Upon his return the Prime Minister announced that "the new era of democracy had arrived."[2] This was accompanied by various programmes designed to put Thailand on the path of genuine democracy. A regular press conference was conducted, and "Hyde Park" activity encouraged. The Hyde Park forum, modelled after what Phibun saw in London, was to provide the opposition with a platform to voice their opinions at a reserved corner of the Phramane Ground in the centre of Bangkok. Among other important democratic measures were the passing of a local government act, designed to decentralise the administration, and a political party act which permitted the formation of political parties. The Political Party Act, which was probably the most notable action undertaken, was by and large a liberal legislation. Besides the provisions demanding all party members to be of Thai nationality and prohibiting an acceptance of financial donation by non-Thai nationals, the law enabled almost any organised group, save the Communists, to form a political party. Sections 3 and 8 of the Political Party Act, B.E. 2498 (1955) state as follows:

> Section 3: 500 or more persons possessed of the right to vote for members of the Assembly of People's Representatives or 10 or more members of People's Representatives may form a political party through registration at the Office of the Under Secretary, Ministry of Interior.

---

1. The Christian Science Monitor, 13 May, 1955.

2. Wilson, p. 29.

> Section 8: When the Office of the Under Secretary, Ministry of Interior has received an application for registration...if the statement of policy or amended statement of policy and by-laws governing the organisation of the party or such by-laws as amended do not contravene the provision of Section 35 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2475 as amended B.E. 2495 or the provisions of law concerning public order or morals, the application shall be registered without delay. The person whose name is given as leader of the party shall be notified in writing within seven days from the receipt of the application for registration.[1]

As a result of Phibun's democratisation, 23 political parties came into existence, prominent among which were Khuang's Democratic Party and the regime's Seri Manangkhasila Party. Phibun became the party leader and Phao its Secretary General. Other leading figures of the ruling group, Sarit, Fuen, and Yuthasat, all held executive posts in the Seri Managkhasila. The participation of Sarit and others in the party, however, was merely a token gesture, the Seri Manangkhasila being administered almost exclusively by Police General Phao, with the Prime Minister's passive approval. Sarit maintained his identification with the party, despite an increasing animosity between the Army and the Police. This was probably due to his loyalty to the Prime Minister. "Although Sarit was a decisive man," said a Thai observer, "he never failed to demonstrate his sincere allegiance to his superior, Field Marshal Phibun. In other words, Sarit was a professional soldier who possessed no unscrupulousness of a politician."[2] Despite Sarit's

---

1. Government of Thailand, The Council of Minister, Political Party Act, B.E. 2498 (1955), International translation, Bangkok, 1955, pp. 725-726.

2. Pla Thong, p. 210.

reluctance to be involved in politics, he was rapidly drawn into it. After the 1951 coup he was appointed Deputy Defence Minister. In 1954 he replaced General Phin as Commander-in-Chief of the Army. In 1955 he was given the ranks of Admiral of the Navy and Air Marshal of the Air Force. In 1956 he was made a Field Marshal. Some observers believe that Phibun, the master politician, was using Sarit to balance the power of Police General Phao.[1]

With the rapid rise of Phao and Sarit, two new factions emerged under their leadership. The Phao faction was an outgrowth of the Coup d'Etat Group of 1947 headed by Phin. However, since 1947 and particularly since the crushing of the abortive Navy coup in June 1951 (during which time Phao played a very prominent role) Phao had built up a small faction of his own. While still maintaining a close contact with his father-in-law, Phin,[2] Phao became a leader in his own right. His principal power base was in his bureaucratic agency, the Police Department. The Police virtually became Phao's personal army. From this organisation, Phao acquired half a dozen ruthless lieutenants who became his instrument of terror. They were given a special status of asawin (knight) for "their outstanding services to Phao."[3] After the "radio coup" of 1951 whereby the old

---

1. Ibid.
2. Besides Phao, Phin also had three other sons-in-law who were members of the Phibun Cabinet. They were General Praman Adireksan, General Siri Siriyothin, and Police General Lamai Uthayananon. Thus Phin had an extensive network of followers and connexion within the Army and the Police.
3. D. Insor, Thailand: A Political, Social and Economic Analysis, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1963, p. 69.

1932 constitution was reinstated, Phao became Deputy Minister of the Interior in the Phibun Cabinet of March 1952 and his power base expanded. Unlike Phibun or Pridi, Phao did not have the loyalty of close friends or old acquaintances. His authority derived primarily from his being head of government agencies rather than through personal admiration or allegiance. His relationship with the Assemblymen was fundamentally businesslike.

In contrast to Phao, Sarit had a sizeable number of close comrades and unlike most of the old leadership, he had not been educated abroad, and was by no means a man of intellect - as Phibun and Pridi were. Unlike Khuang and Seni, the two civilian prime ministers, Sarit was not a noted speaker; Sarit's strength seemed to be in his frankness and simplicity. According to his cronies, Sarit's main virtues were his directness, and a power to win friends. As his biographer puts it:

> All his Army comrades said that Major Sarit was a gentleman and extremely likeable. He was frank and had no secret from anyone. He worked at work, played at play. He was never haughty and the soldiers under his command considered him their friend...He was more interested in the well-being of his friends than his own. He was very concerned. He suffered for his friends and he was always very helpful.[1]

If this description of Sarit is correct, it proved to be to his advantage in Thai politics. It contributed to Sarit's popularity over Phao who was generally regarded as unscrupulous

---

1. Thai Noi and Rungroj Na Nakhorn, Nayokrathamontri khon thi sibet kab sam phunam patiwat (The Eleventh Premier and Three Leaders of the Coup d'Etat), Phrae Phitaya Press, 1964, pp. 25-26, translated by the writer.

and crude.[1] Sarit's personality seemed to fit in with the Thais' image of the ideal leader. His distinctive quality (or what seemed to have been his quality) coincided with a cherished Thai virtue, karuna (kindness). As Wilson observes:

> Karuna is sympathy or pity for those who have suffering. It also involves the desire to help those who have fallen on bad days and the willingness to sacrifice one's own or happiness for others. Karuna is characteristically the proper virtue for the powerful in their dealing with the weak and may be expected to manifest itself in generosity.
>
> Mutthita is the compliment of karuna. It is the capacity to rejoice in the good fortune of others or at least to remain free from envy in the face of others' good fortune.[2]

Hence, many key figures were drawn to Sarit. They were attracted to him because of his personal quality, because of his enormous financial resources, and because he was recognised as a successful manipulator. They were mostly men of his generation, composed of Army officers, Air Force officers, civilian technocrats and some official-intellectuals.[3] Several persons in the Phibun group, Prince Wan Waithayakorn and Luang Wijit for example, also maintained good relationships with Sarit.[4] Sarit's faction may be generally

---

1. Chit Wippathawat, Phao saraphab (Phao Confesses), Phrae Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1960, pp. 22-31.

2. Wilson, p. 78.

3. As in old China, Thai intellectuals are mostly scholar-gentry and tend to exhibit an inclination towards conservatism. See Kamol Somvichian, "Laksana lae panha khorng panyachon thai" (Characteristics and Problems of Thai Intellectuals), in The Social Science Review, Vol.6, No.1, 1968, pp. 38-56.

4. They subsequently served in Sarit's Cabinet. Luang Wijit became the chief architect of Sarit's administrative reorganisation and served as his speech writer.

described as "military-technocratic-intellectual" instead of the "Army group" as it is customarily referred to. Those from the Army were composed of Sarit's old comrades, colleagues and old superior, the most notable of whom were General Thanom Kittikhajorn and General Praphat Jarusathian. Sarit's relationship with Thanom and Praphat dated back to their years in the Royal Military Academy,[1] consolidated since their collaboration in the 1947 Army coup. From 1947, Thanom and Praphat were rapidly promoted through the Army chain of command. In 1956, Thanom occupied the highly important post of Commander of the First Army, the post vacated by Sarit, while Praphat became Thanom's deputy. Others also included men such as General Krit Sriwara, General Net Khemayothin, General Phong Punnakan, General Krit Punakan, and General Jitti Nawisathian. In the Air Force, Sarit could count on two old schoolmates: Air Marshal Chalermkiat Watthanangkun and Air Marshal Bunchu Jantharubeksa. Chalermkiat and Bunchu were once under the command of Air Marshal Fuen, Phibun's ally. They subsequently emerged as Sarit's committed supporters. From the technocrats, men such as Professor Sukit Nimanhemin,[2] Mr. Thawi Rangkham and Mr. Wibun Thammabut, may be

---

1. Of the three, General Praphat was the youngest. They did not belong to the same class but knew each other since the Academy.

2. In 1957 following the overthrow of the Phibun government, Sukit became leader of the Sarit-sponsored Chat sangkhom (National Socialist) Party. He was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Economic Affairs Ministerin the Thanom Government (under Sarit's aegie) of January, 1958. In 1969, he became Minister of Education in the Thanom Government.

considered members of the Sarit original group. They were technocrats of ability with former connexions with some university in Bangkok. The last category was comprised of the rising young bureaucrats, who had had personal contacts with Sarit largely through their professors. Most of them had received advanced training in the United States. Although these young officials by no means belonged to the inner group, they provided Sarit with the needed technical advice and expertise.

Within this extensive network of groups and factions lies the working of military politics. This network is made up of persons bound together by various relationships: teacher-student, superior-inferior, schoolmates, colleagues, and relations. Membership in the same organisation, the board of directors of private companies, for example, may foster group relationship, although this is not always necessarily so.[1] The pattern or "behaviour" of the group or faction in its working is not yet known and thorough information about their members' personalities, activities, family links, educational backgrounds, and the like must be available before any meaningful analysis can be attempted. As Wilson rightly warns:

---

1. As a matter of fact, individuals who belong to opposing groups or khana may sit on the same board, especially of Chinese companies. This is due to the fact that Chinese (or Thai) entrepreneurs who seek maximum co-operation or "protection" from Thai officials tend to invite influential members of various powerful khana to their boards of directors, thus assuring themselves of continued co-operation should any of the khana be ejected from power.

> The clique has no formal organisation. It is not likely to have meetings, it has no name, and it has no established list of members. It is a web of obligations which ma spread out into a number of groups and organisations of other types. Probably no one knows all its ramifications, if it is a large clique, other than the leader himself. It may not even be considered by him as a coherent group.[1]

Personal contact and self-interest are the main basis of group coherence. Ideology is largely absent.[2] Thus groups or factions tend to be organised along horizontal lines. In the Thai context, the lines between different groups are particularly blurred. A man may belong to various groups simultaneously, especially if his integrity is high or his service is much needed.[3] Or, he may not truly belong to any group at all, staying most of the crisis time on the fringe. Some so-called groups or cliques came into being during a brief interval and disappeared rapidly. Some are merely a collection of old acquaintances, and nothing more.

Hence, although group or faction may provide a useful avenue to the understanding of Thai politics, it should be treated with caution. The analysis is sometimes excessively and dogmatically

---

1. Wilson, p. 117.

2. It may be noted that in some instances ideology (or policy) does differentiate one group from the other: the differences between Pridi's liberal-socialistic leaning and Khuang's conservative-capitalistic tendency, for example. Yet these differences are, by and large, secondary. What is more important is the leader-or personality.

3. Such men were Luang Wijit Wathakan, Prince Wan Waithayakorn, Admiral Luang Sinthu Songkhramchai, General Adul Aduldetjarat, Admiral Luang Supha Chalasai, Air Marshal Mahasanthana Wetchayanrangsiri, Professor Sukit Nimanhemin, Nai Pote Sarasin, etc. These men belonged to different subsequent Cabinets led by leaders of different groups.

overdone.[1] Moreover, groups or clique in the Thai set-up are far from permanent. They are extremely fluid. The fact is that in Thailand men change allegiance frequently, and society is mobile. Self-interest may change and then the relationship is no longer useful. Men may experience a change of status, and hence of role. Old friends may become enemies, old enemies new allies, and so on. This impermanency of group or clique in Thai politics reflects the nature of the Thais and their ethical and social systems in general. As a noted scholar of Thailand observes:

---

1. An impression given by the Riggs analysis of clique and faction in Thai politics is that men seem to have nothing to do but "struggle" endlessly for power. All Thai politicians appear as nothing but cool, calculated and efficient political robots, all too ready to "move", "lay plans", "gather strength" and "consolidate" their power. They seem to have been in control of their every movement and never victims of circumstances or events beyond their control. The following (Riggs: 1966: 223) is a specimen:

> Song faced several dangerous possibilities. Mano, in alliance with Phibun and Sinthu, might move to oust Song and thus to consolidate their power against that of the able but outflanked senior clique. Faced with such an alliance, Song would surely have gone down to defeat. But Song may well have calculated that Phibun would not lend himself to such a one-sided alliance, since left alone to face the growing power of Mano's countercircle, the junior clique's army faction, with the uncertain help of the navy faction, would probably soon have lost power to the older officials.

> Bangkok society is in no way marked off into static social components out of which people never move. Present urban society is characterised by an extra-ordinary amount of status (or class) mobility, both up and down the ladder: people are constantly changing jobs, changing their statuses, moving in and out of city and the like. As a result of this frequent movement, class lines tend to become blurred and unclear.[1]

The Hyde Park experiment proved to be an unexpected political blunder for Phibun. Many amateur orators, professional politicians, and self-seeking opportunists found it an ideal forum to attack the government. This political oratory was given wide publicity in the press in which Phao and his police ruffians became the main target. Charges of corruption and mismanagement were among favourite topics. Several Socialists demanded the government to withdraw from SEATO and follow the line of "non-alignment." The Constitution also came under severe public criticism. "This greatly liberalised political environment," state two observers, "turned out to be more hectic than Phibun probably expected."[2] Thus after its eight-month existence the Hyde Park free speech was banned. The Prime Minister justified this action on the ground that the minority groups had been voicing opinions "beyond the limits."[3] This was followed by the arrests of left-wing leaders and other "trouble makers." In his official statement Phibun alleged that despite his effort at

---

1. Lauriston Sharp, ed., Thailand, Human Relations Area Files, New Haven, 1956, p. 164.

2. Amry Vandenbosch and Richard Butwell, The Changing Face of Southeast Asia, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, 1966, p. 291.

3. The Straits Times, 23 February, 1956.

democratisation an irresponsible group had been "trying to upset the laws of the country, calling itself democratic and in opposition to the government, conducting itself in such a wa as to cause damage to government, the National Assembly and public administration by instigating people to unrest."[1]

Undoubtedly severe public criticisms had much to undermine the government's party. As the general election, scheduled to be held on February, 1957, was drawing near political campaigns became increasingly intensive. Though Generals Phao and Sarit were not candidates, Prime Minister Phibun, as leader of the party, was obliged to contest in the capital. Bangkok, with its politically conscious and relatively sophisticated population of 1⅓ million, was considered the stronghold of Khuang. In order to win the ballots, Phao was compelled to employ all the influence, power, and financial resources at his disposal. As Police Chief, Minister of Interior, and Head of the Central Intelligence Department, Phao possessed in large measure the instrument of coercion and political manipulation. On the eve of the elections, these political resources were mobilised to ensure victory for the régime. In Bangkok, Khuang, due to his practical common sense and integrity, was considered the favourite candidate. To defeat Khuang, Phao's political hoodlums and police ruffians terrorised the electorate. There were numerous reports of fraudulent voting with the use either of false ballots or by ineligible voters. A great number of

---

1. The Hindu, 7 March, 1956.

persons found their names missing from the registration records. Unmistakably, most of these illegal practices were the work of the government's followers.[1] Unable to control the situation, the Governor of Bangkok resigned.[2] Khuang bitterly charged the régime with cheating during voting and counting the ballots. He called the election "the dirtiest ever."[3]

As a result of these irregularities the Government's Party won 85 out of 160 contested seats in the National Assembly.[4] And despite Khuang's overwhelming popularity, the Democrats captured only 2 seats in Bangkok whereas the Seri Manangkhasila won 7 seats.

The public was outraged. "The Seri Manangkhasila victory," said a Thai observer, "caused bitterness and hostility in the public. The Thai people were shamelessly robbed of their right to vote."[5] The Democrats declared that they would take the matter to court. Most newspapers supported Khuang's accusation that the election, especially in Bangkok, was a fraud. In response to public discontent, the régime declared a state of national emergency. It described the public reaction a "an attempt by a group of persons and newspapers at inciting the people to unrest and subversion of foreign support."[6] Field Marshal Sarit was made the "Military

1. Thai Noi and Rungroj Na Nakhorn, Lucktang kueng phutthakan (Elections in the Year B.E. 2500), Prasoetsin Press, Bangkok, 1957, pp. 307-308.
2. Ibid., pp. 289-290.
3. The New York Times, 1 March, 1957.
4. Ibid.
5. Pla Thong, p. 284.
6. The New York Times, 2 March, 1957.

Caretaker" in charge of the emergency. Sarit's appointment came as a surprise to those who remembered him warning the Army not to be involved in the elections. Sarit's position is said to be as follows:

> Field Marshal Sarit said that the situation had become critical. He feared that the people would be incited to riot. To prevent chaos which might endanger the country, the Army had to take control of the situation. This action by the Army, he said, had nothing to do with the elections. However dirty the elections might have been, it was no concern of the Army. It was up to those who accused to contest in court. The Army's business was only to protect the nation. Regarding the question whether it was true that the information concerning the so-called foreign subversion came from the Police Director General, Field Marshal Sarit said it was untrue. It came from the Army. Army intelligence, he added, was a great deal more reliable than Police General Phao's. Sarit said he was sincere in providing protection to the people...He asked the public not to be alarmed and asked all the officials to understand the true intentions of his action.[1]

The most serious challenge to the régime came from an unexpected section of the public, the students. Disregarding the state of emergency and the ban on public gathering, the students of Chulalongkorn University, normally regarded as largely conservative, staged a mass rally in protest against the government. They lowered at half-mast the national flag "in memory of dead democracy."[2] Sarit rushed to the university and attempted to calm the students. After a long responsive question-and-answer period, Sarit admitted to the students that the election had been

---

1. Thai Noi and Rungroj, pp. 386-87, translated by the writer.
2. The New York Times, 3 March, 1957.

"completely dirty from all sides."[1] Deeply impressed by what he saw, the Army Chief gave verbal permission for them to march to the Ministry of Interior which was chiefly responsible for the conduct of the election.[2] The disgruntled public and other university students soon joined in and the march became the most impressive popular demonstration Thailand has ever seen.[3] Student delegates were sent to meet the authorities to whom they handed a petition demanding:

1) That the state of emergency be lifted.
2) That the result of this election be declared null.
3) That a new election be held and students appointed administrators in charge of the polling stations.
4) That the irregularities during the past election be investigated by the Ministry of Interior.[4]

Subsequently, the Prime Minister was called upon to handle the situation. In front of the students and with Sarit at his side,[5] Phibun attempted to console the public. While pledging himself to "free democracy", the Prime Minister insisted on the maintenance of law and order. Regarding the alleged fraudulent election, Phibun maintained that it was the matter for the court

---

1. Ibid.
2. Upon the advice of his legal aid, General Amphon Jintakanon (a civilian turned soldier who also taught at the University), Field Marshal Sarit announced that in spite of the prohibition on public demonstration the students could go to the Ministry in small groups in a peaceful manner. He said that the Army would provide them with protection.
3. Thai Noi and Rungroj, pp. 413-415.
4. Ibid., p. 388, translated by the writer.
5. General Phao, the main target of the demonstrators, did not appear at the rally.

to decide. He said that he did not aspire for political power against the people's wishes. "If the people do not want me," said Field Marshal Phibun, "I will just go home and stay put."[1] However, Phibun's usual charm and wit no longer moved the public. His speech was met with jeers and boos. Sarit, on the other hand, emerged as the man of the moment. His candid and frank speech received enthusiastic response. After the Prime Minister had finished his statement, Sarit announced that he was a soldier and "had nothing to do with politics."[2] He agreed with the students that the state of emergency should expire "as soon as possible." Sarit also pledged no censorship of the press. "The best alternative," said the Army Chief, "is for us to face one another with the truth,"[3]

Thus it became quite clear that the Army Commander-in-Chief had rallied himself behind the public, or at least those who were concerned with politics, whereas the Prime Minister became increasingly identified with the unpopular Police Chief. Despite his rugged background and unattractive appearance, Sarit's handling of the crowd was impressive. Although Sarit was still generally regarded as one of Phibun's loyal subordinates he seemed to have come to the conclusion that the Prime Minister's case was an unjust one. He thus gradually dislodged himself from the régime. In the

---

1. Thai Noi and Rungroj, pp. 415-416.
2. Ibid., p. 417.
3. Ibid.

process of doing so, Sarit consulted his military colleagues[1] regularly and he listened to his advisors attentively. Aware of the fact that he lacked the brilliant mind of Phibun, Sarit leaned considerably on those around him. However, none seemed to doubt that Sarit alone made all the final decisions. With the consensus of his military associates, Sarit informed the Prime Minister that Phao, the man behind the trouble, would have to go.[2]

On 21 March, 1957 Phibun announced the new Cabinet composing of 30 Ministers. Police Director General Phao retained his post of Interior Minister. It thus appeared that Phibun had decided to keep Phao as a balancing force against Sarit whose popularity had become an immediate threat to the Prime Minister. Phao's Police force, it should be noted, was the second largest in the country. It is said to have composed of 42,835 men or one policeman for every 407 citizens.[3] With extensive American assistance via the CIA-operated Sea Supply Corporation, Phao had been able to build his

---

1. By this time two prominent Army Generals, Thanom Kittikhajorn and Praphat Jarusathian, emerged as Sarit's powerful supporters. On the Air Force side, two younger officers, Air Marshal Bunchu Jantharubeksa and Chaloemkiat Wathanangkun, had replaced the ageing Fuen as the influential voice of the service. Bunchu and Chaloemkiat were Sarit's cronies and staunch followers. Phao, on the other hand, was very much a lone wolf. He drew his political strength largely from the close association with Phibun and his financial control over the Seri Manangkhasila politicians. Phin, Phao's father-in-law, no longer exercised any great influence since the loss of his Army Commander post to Sarit in 1954. The Navy was in large measure powerless since the abortive 1951 coup.
2. In his press interview, Sarit said that he hoped the new Cabinet would be composed of those who were favoured by the people and that "the Minister who was the centre of hatred" would be ousted. Thai Noi and Rungroj, pp. 420-421.
3. Darling, p. 114.

force into a modern army.[1] The Police was equipped with tanks, artillery, armoured cars, aircraft, naval patrol vessels (called Tamruat nam or Naval Police), and a paratroop battalion. His political machine was financed largely by money obtained through a well-organised opium smuggling.[2]

Phao's reappointment outraged the Army and the discontented public. In protest, Sarit and 45 Assembly members, most of whom were Army officers, resigned from the legislature and the Cabinet.[3] They demanded that the new government be appointed by the Assembly and that Phao resign immediately his posts of Minister of Interior and Director General of the Police. "This is a sort of underground coup d'etat," said the government spokesman, "I believe Marshal Phibun will not resign."[4]

This time Sarit did not wait long for Phibun's reply. While the Prime Minister was attempting to work out a compromise solution, the Army struck in force.[1] At near midnight of 16 September, 1957

---

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., pp. 144-145.
3. However, all of the officers retained their military posts.
4. The New York Times, 14 September, 1957.
5. It is believed that Sarit's action stemmed from an Army intelligence report that Phao was in the process of launching a Police commando raid aiming at the lives of Sarit and other military leaders. Thai Noi and Rungroj Na Nakhorn, Nayokratthamontri khon thi sibet kab sam phunam patiwat (The Eleventh Premier and Three Leaders of the Coup d'Etat), Phrae Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1964, pp. 96-101.

it was announced that the Military Party (Khana Thahan) had taken over the government. Prime Minister Phibun fled to near-by Cambodia and Police General Phao was subsequently sent into exile in Switzerland. Sarit's coup, as it appeared, had the consent of the king.[1] King Phoumiphon's royal command on the eve of the military take-over reads:

> Royal Proclamation
> Appointing the Military Caretaker of the Kingdom
> Phoumiphon Adunyadet P.R.
>
> Since the Government of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram as Prime Minister has failed to accord the people's confidence and has not been able to keep peace and tranquility in the nation, the military party led by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat has successfully taken over the administration of the Kingdom. I, hereby, appoint Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat Military Caretaker of the Kingdom. May the people be in peace. Henceforth, all officials will obey the order of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat.
>
> Given on 16 September, B.E. 2500 (1957)[2]

In retrospect, the fall of Field Marshal Phibun and Police General Phao was, to a large extent, the direct result of Phibun's democratisation. Several observers have argued that the introduction of democratic programmes, especially the press conference, the political party statute, and the "Hyde Park" forum in 1955, as well as the general election in 1957, were Phibun's shrewd moves to check

---

1. A New York Times report (24 September 1957) stated: "A significant aspect is that Monarchists played an important part in the coup. Phibun and Phao have not been sympathetic to the monarch or to young King Phumiphon Aduldet personally. Sarit, on the other hand, is pro-Monarchist and seems to have had the approval of the King and the aristocracy in his take-over."

2. Government of Thailand, Prakat phra barommaratchaongkan tang phuraksa phranakhorn fai thahan (Royal Proclamation Appointing the Military Caretaker of the Kingdom), Bangkok, 1957, translated by the writer.

the growing power of Generals Phao and Sarit. "Phibun," said an observer, "might have been trying to mobilise mass opinion against Phao in particular - whom he apparently regarded as the chief threat to himself."[1] This writer, however, is of the opinion that it seems less likely. Since his return from Britain and the United States, Phibun appeared genuinely impressed by the virtues of a practical democracy.[2] Judging from his past records, Field Marshal Phibun was a nationalist and an outstanding moderniser. In spite of his occasional unsophisticated methods, Phibun's sincerity was hardly questionable. He was hard working, purposeful and almost incorruptible. A patriot, he wanted his country to enter into the same rank as other progressive nations. "All the world has become democratic now," said the Field Marshal in his exile after the Sarit coup, "why should we be among those who still cling to the ancient?"[3]

---

1. Vandenbosch and Butwell, p. 290.

2. His press conference was impressive. The Prime Minister, unlike some of his Cabinet members, demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the government affairs and displayed considerable tolerance towards the press. He took to wearing civilian clothes regularly and was seen around Bangkok either in his green sportscar or a small sedan instead of the former chauffeur-driven limousine.

3. Sombun Woraphong, Jormphon sarit thanarat (Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat), Kasem Samphan Press, Bangkok, 1964, pp. 89-90.

Perhaps critics may rightly doubt Phibun's sincerity in attempting to build a viable democracy in Thailand. Yet one thing seems certain, Phibun had a keen political instinct. The Field Marshal may have been aware of the growing force of public opinion. To his own discomforture public dissent, as manipulated through the press and other news media, was beyond government power. This is due to the fact that mass communications, particularly the press, were owned and controlled by various powerful groups and factions - the Army, the Police, the entrepeneurs, and even the court.[1] In Thailand, especially in Bangkok and Thonburi, there are "too many small newspapers - usually personal mouthpieces of aspiring politicians, policemen or soldiers... - with small circulations. They rely on sex, crime, and scurrity to increase their sales."[2] Although their combined total daily circulations do not exceed 200,000,[3] they wield enormous influence. "The Press," states an observer, "is exceedingly political and partisan, and each day and week the public is assaulted by hundreds of thousands of words of opinion."[4]

---

1. Though the Palace does not own any newspaper, several dailies (and weeklies) belong to those who are close to the court. The Siam Rat (daily) and The Standard (weekly) are such examples. An English language newspaper, The Bangkok World, is believed to operate from CIA funds since its former editor, Darrell Berrigan, is known to have worked for the agency during the war.

2. D. Insor, Thailand: A Political, Social and Economic Analysis, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1963, p. 95.

3. Ibid.

4. Wilson, p. 71.

Several of these partisan press were highly critical of the regime. Kukrit, the editor and owner of Siam Rat, for example, called Phibun a dictator. "(His) government since the past ten years," writes Kukrit, "is based principally on fear."[1] Since Kukrit was close to the Throne, he could not be silenced through force.

With this highly critical press, the force of dissent grew in strength. The political public also greatly expanded. Within the period of nine years since Phibun became Prime Minister, education had become widespread. Student enrollment had climbed from less than two million immediately after the war to almost four million in 1957.[2] The official figure[3] for Thai students studying abroad is given as 748 in 1951: by 1957, the number is close to 2,000.[4] Though Thailand had been under military rule for a long period, its universities were mostly free from interference. The independent nature of the colleges and faculties made any attempt to control them difficult, if at all possible. Thai university students had had a consistent tradition of running their own affairs. Although these students tended to be conservative, they were by no means

---

1. Kukrit Pramoj, "Freedom From Fear", in Kukrit Pramoj et. al., Pisat kanmuang (Political Ghost), Bandansan Press, Bangkok, p.10.

2. Government of Thailand, The Information Service of Thailand, Thailand at A Glance, London, 1967, p. 14.

3. This figure represents only those students under the supervision of the Civil Service Commission. The actual number is much higher if it includes the non-goverment-sponsored students abroad.

4. D.H. Evers and T.H. Silcock, "Elites and Selection," in T.H. Silcock, ed., Thailand: Social and Economic Studies in Development, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1967, p. 14. The exact number is 1,980 students.

apolitical. Students at Thammasat University, for instance, were largely anti-government. University students constituted a core group of the political public. "Public opinion" states Wilson, "is a political force of some consequence."[1]

By legitimising the growing force, Prime Minister Phibun may have hoped to take the pressure out of dissent. Perhaps he may have looked for personal popularity, which he actually obtained at the beginning (his"Press Conference" received wide approval, even from his bitter opponents).[2] However, when dissent became more vigorous, and even near to violent the government felt insecure. The Army, seeing that the régime had become too weak in the face of legitimised protests began to look for an alternative. With Sarit's popularity among the students and the press, the Army exploited public discontent. Public protests became a convenient excuse for the Sarit group to deliver an ultimatum, first to Phao, its immediate enemy, and subsequently to the Prime Minister, because he did not extricate himself from the Police General. The mass resignations of 45 officers following the announcement of the "new" Phibun Cabinet in March, convinced the Army that they could act in unison. And because of the anti-government protests (which seldom happened in Thailand), the Throne felt obliged to interfere. With

---

1. Wilson, p.70.

2. Kukrit, ed., p. 20.

the public behind it (or against Phibun) and with the king's blessing, the Army was ready to intervene, as it now had all the necessary incentives to act: the national crises, the mood to act, and the legitimacy of its intervention.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ARMY: ORGANISATION, EDUCATION AND RESOURCES

In the heart of old Bangkok stood an egg-shaped recreational park called the Phramane Ground, a name derived from Mount Meru, the Hindu's cosmological centre. Surrounding the periphery of this landmark were the three highest institutions in Siam: the Royal Palace, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, and the Ministry of Defence. In present day Thailand, the location of the three establishments remains the same. However, the Ministry of Defence alone plays the decisive role in the political life of the nation,

I. The National Defence

Under the 1968 Constitution the monarch retains the title of the Supreme Commander of the Royal Thai Armed Forces,[1] however, the real power over national defence is actually shared by four organisations: the National Security Council, the Ministry of Defence, the Defence Council, and the Supreme Command.[2] Within these bodies, the Defence Minister wields impressive authority. He is chairman of the 23-member Defence Council, chairman of the 7-member Supreme Command, as well as head of his own Ministry of Defence. Since 1938 the Defence Minister has almost always controlled

---

1. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2511 (1968) Article 10.

2. The Government of Thailand, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand Official Yearbook: 1964, Government House Printing Office, Bangkok, 1964, pp. 165-169.

the office of the prime minister; in consequence, he is in reality chairman of the National Security Council as well. The National Security Council is a recent creation. It was established under the National Security Act of B.E. 2502 (1959). It is composed of 9 members of which the Prime Minister is Chairman and the Deputy Prime Minister, Deputy Chairman. Other members include the Ministers of Defence, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Interior, and Communications, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and the Secretary General of the National Security Council.[1] Thus, it is the top level policy-formulating body designed to co-ordinate the military and non-military policies with respect to national defence. It deals with "matters concerning internal and foreign affairs as well as military and economic policies, and such other matters as may affect the national security..."[2] To a large measure this defence organisation takes the form of the American system. In substance, however, it is a Siamese creation. For the Thai Defence Minister has always been a soldier. And the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, unlike the elected United States President, has always been a general. By and large, military technocrats dominate the formulation and execution of the national defence policies; the major role is played by men in the Supreme Command Headquarters (see Appendix 2). The Supreme Command is the command body of the

---

1. Ibid., p. 166.

2. Ibid.

Thai armed forces which consist of the Royal Thai Army, the Royal Thai Navy, and the Royal Thai Air Force.

It is estimated that the total military strength of Thailand is about 130,000 men.[1] This is an increase since the crisis in Laos at which time it was reported to be about 100,000 men.[2] The Army with 85,000[3] is the largest component. It is mostly armed with American-made equipment and weapons. Its organisation is also modelled to a large extent after that of the United States Army. The ground force is composed of about 10 combat-ready Regimental Combat Teams and a division of armoured troops. The Army's standard of performance is said to be good. During military exercises with the SEATO members it received favourable comments from the Allied commanders.[4]

The Royal Thai Navy has a strength of about 25,000 men.[5] Due to the lack of modern, large vessels,[6] it is responsible chiefly for coastal patrol, mine sweeping, and anti-submarine work. Its

---

1. J.W. Fulbright, "Speech in the Senate," Congressional Record, No. 167, October, 1966, translated into Thai in The Social Science Review, Vol. 4, No. 3, December, 1966, pp. 51-56.

2. George Modelski, SEATO: Six Studies, The Australian National University Press, Melbourne, 1962, p. 118.

3. Fulbright, p. 52.

4. Modelski, p. 118.

5. Fulbright, p. 52.

6. Which is a result of military politics, heavy reliance on allied naval protection, shortage of funds, and sheer jealousy among the three branches of the armed forces.

marines battalion, which had been abolished in 1951 following the abortive naval coup and then revived in 1954, is considered efficient.

The Royal Thai Air Force is believed to have 20,000 men.[1] It is armed with modern equipment and weapons furnished largely by the United States. Some of the aircraft recently obtained are F-86 F, F-86 L, C-47, L-28, and various types of helicopters.[2] In 1961 a chain of radar stations was constructed along the northeastern border, and they are now working on a 24-hour schedule. Many large airfields were recently built in various strategic centres. In addition to the flying corps, there is the Royal Air Force Regiment of about 10,000 men in charge of airfield security and maintenance.[3]

Of the three branches, the Army is the most vital element militarily and politically. Since 1932, in the game of military politics, the Army has never had a failure. Army coups d'etat on six occasions - June 1932, June 1933, November 1947, November 1951, September 1957, and October 1958 - were smooth and successful. During these events a simple show of strength and the capture of strategic places and personalities were sufficient. In October 1933, February 1949, and June 1951 when the Army was forced to fight those who attempted to seize power, it was victorious on all three occasions. Thus, in the arena of Thai military politics, the Army is clearly the victor.

---

1. Fulbright, p. 52.
2. Government of Thailand, Yearbook: 1964, p. 175.
3. Modelski, pp. 118-119.

II. Army Organisation

Historically, the modern Thai Army is a recent creation which is based on the Western concepts of functionalism and technology. Before 1949 it was a mixed product of German, French, Russian, Italian, and British influences, though in outward appearances resembling that of the British.[1] Starting in 1949, under the second Phibun Songkhram government, it became rapidly Americanised in organisation, education, logistics, and tactics. Increasingly, American advisors have played vital roles in the performance and outlook of the Thai Army.[2] The RTA is now equipped almost entirely with American-supplied weapontry and other military hardware.

Since its first conception the Army's organisation has been among the most efficient and outstanding of all the Thai bureaucracies. Because of this the Thais were able to send an expeditionary force to join the Allies in the First World War. Between 1940-1945 in the Franco-Thai conflict and during the Second World War, the RTA was capable of mobilising 70,000 men for combat duty plus 120,000 support combatants.[3] Taking into consideration that these figures

---

1. During the reigns of King Vajiravudh and King Prachathipok, Army ranks, command orders, and technical jargons were pronounced in English. The present Thai military insignias still bear the British resemblance.

2. In 1966 there were 2,500 U.S. military personnels in Thailand, Fulbright, p. 51.

3. Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Kan jad nuai songkhram indojin lae mahaasiaburapha 2483-2488 (Combat Organisation During the Indochinese Conflict and the Great War in Asia 1940-1945), Bangkok, 1967, pp. 339, 342.

constitute more than one per cent of the total population at that time which was 16 million, this was an achievement. Throughout the years the Army, via its military training programmes, has contributed substantially to the modern outlook of the Thai citizens. Writing in the early 1920's Graham had a high opinion of the Thai Army. He thus defended the raison d'etre of the force, saying:

> There are those who consider that the geographical and political situation of Siam render it improbable that such an army as she may be able to create can ever be of much use to her, and that the material at her disposal is not the stuff from which good soldiers can be made. But there is no doubt that as a school of training and as a safeguard of internal peace and order, the maintenance of armed forces sufficient adequately to reinforce the gendarmerie and police is not only desirable but absolutely necessary whatever may be the nature and extent of their foreign political values. Moreover, the working of military law as exemplified by the smart appearance and orderly behaviour of the men concentrated in Bangkok for the periodical reviews held there, is calculated to astonish the skeptic and to upset all their theories, and encourages the belief that, under good organisation, the Siamese peasant may be turned into a good soldier... provided she can afford to do so, there appears no good reason why Siam should not place her army and navy on such a footing as may seem best to her. And one invincible argument in favour of her army lies in the fact that without it she could not have come into line with the Allies in the Great War and therefore would have missed an absolutely unique opportunity for the consolidation of her world position, an opportunity of which, be it said, she has taken the fullest advantage.[1]

With respect to personnel, the Army is among the organisations which attract men of talent and ability. Its educational system has had a long tradition and has produced officers of calibre not only for its own force but also for other services such as the Navy,

---

1. W.A. Graham, Siam, Vol.II, Alexander Moring Limited, London, 1924, pp. 317-218.

the Air Force, and the Police. With the exception of the Ministry of Interior, the Royal Thai Army is the most comprehensive in its organisational structure and objectives and the biggest in size.

The Army is Thailand's major combat ground force. In theory it is responsible to the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and ultimately to the Prime Minister. In practice, however, it is under the direct control of the Army Commander-in-Chief. The Army Commander-in-Chief is assisted by a Deputy and two Assistant Commanders-in-Chief of the Army. There is a Chief-of-Staff, a Deputy Chief-of-Staff, and three Assistant Chiefs-of-Staff for Personnel, Operations, and Logistics respectively. The Army's "non-combatant" administration is divided into four major sections: the General Staff, Combat Service, Special Missions, and Education, which are in turn subdivided into 28 departments (krom) headed by officers of general-grade.[1] The combatant apparatus is administratively organised into Army Areas, Military Circles, and Military Provinces:

---

1. Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Khambanyai ruang nathi kanjad lae saingan khorng korhor borkor thahan sungsud thorbor thorror lae thoror (Lecture on Duties, Organisations, and Chains of Command of the Ministry of Defence, the Supreme Command Headquarters, the Army, Navy, and Air Force), Bangkok, (mimeographed), p. 5.

Army Area	Military Circle	Military Province
First Army Area	1st Military Circle	Military Province of-
		" Bangkok
		" Phetchaburi
		" Ratburi
		" Saraburi
	2nd Military Circle	Military Province of -
		" Chachoengsao
		" Prajinburi
		Military Province of - Lopburi (Under direct control of First Army Area)
Second Army Area	3rd Military Circle	Military Province of -
		" Khonkaen
		" Nakhorn Ratchasima
		" Surin
		" Udornthani
	6th Military Circle	Military Province of -
		" Roi-ed
		" Ubonratchathani
Third Army Area	4th Military Circle	Military Province of -
		" Nakhorn-Sawan
		" Phitsanulok
		" Uttaradit
	7th Military Circle	Military Province of -
		" Chiangrai
		" Lampang
	5th Military Circle (Under direct control of the Royal Thai Army)	Military Province of -
		" Chumphorn
		" Nakhorn Sri Thamarat
		" Songkhla

Source: Government of Thailand, Yearbook: 1964, p. 170.

It should be pointed out that in structure andconcept the administration of the RTA does not differ markedly from that of other Thai governmental agencies. As a matter of fact, Thai

administrative practices and behaviour, military or otherwise, are remarkably similar in all of the national and local bureaucracies.[1] The Army thus possesses, to a certain extent, the same vices and virtues as other departments. Bureaucratic redtape and indecision, outmoded management techniques, low salaries, and corruption are some of its main problems. Like other heads of the organisations of ministerial level, the Army Commander-in-Chief enjoys considerable authority over his department. He has the power to appoint, reward, and punish officers and civilian personnel according to the royal statutes. In line with Thai administrative traditions, he is in a position to command and demand respect and loyalty from his staff and subordinates. Unlike Army Commander in a democratic country, the Thai Army Commander-in-Chief is seldom bothered by civilian involvement in military affairs. The Army is his constituency, and his ability to command it depends almost entirely on his relationship with officers who hold the key Army units, and with men of the same category in other branches. Like other departmental heads, the Army Commander has the duty of looking after the welfare of his men and competing with his counterparts of other government agencies for the limited funds and resources at the disposal of the central government.

---

1. Under the Civil Service Act even the universities must conform to the same centralised philosophy and bureaucratic formalities.

Unlike most civilian organisations, the Army posseses the impressive qualities of adaptability and purposefulness. The exactitude of ranks and the precision of duties enable Army officers to minimise the problem of overlapping authority and confusing roles normally engendered by the civil bureaucracy. Its nature as an action-oriented organisation, its exposure to the modern technology of warfare, provide the officers with an additional edge over other agencies. Unlike most civilians, military men, though they exhibit enormous self-confidence, appear more ready to accept, especially in non-military matters, their own shortcomings. They have often demonstrated a willingness to learn and borrow from outsiders any methods or skills suitable to their needs. Evidence of modern concepts and methodology adopted by the Thai Army is abundant, particularly in the fields of human relations, psychology, political science, and management. Hence, while most civilians tend to look at the Army as a backward area of human endeavour, the officers are alert to change and progress beyond their own area of expertise. A remark by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat on the needs for a scientific approach to the nation's problems reflects the forward-looking attitude of the Thai military:

> A new undertaking under the Revolutionary Party is to give more respectability to the academic. Formerly academicians were not given the honour they deserved. Economics was considered by some people a mere matter of common sense. Those who had no training in economics were able to argue about it and thus thought that they could do without the aid of the economist. I do not subscribe to such a view. It is my belief that all branches of knowledge should be studied from their very roots. No man or group of men can claim to know everything.

> So it is necessary to listen to the ideas of those who specialise in a particular field. Suitable planning must follow research. This is far better than pursuing a policy without technical knowledge. I, therefore, have called upon many experts to help us. That is a reason why organisations such as the Economic Development Board and the National Board of Education are big organisations. They are composed of learned men of expertise. In addition, we are assisted by the National Research Council which is the highest institution of learning. With these men and with the know-how we possess, we will move towards the economic development of the nation.[1]

In spite of the fact that hitherto important positions in the Army are reserved for the graduates of the Military Academy, and particularly those of the Command and General Staff College, the Army, more so than the Navy and the Air Force, is liberal in its recruitment policy.[2] Men of ability and qualified educational backgrounds are more readily accepted by the Army. (See Appendix 3). The inclusion of diversified talents and experiences tend to broaden the so-called military mentality and contribute to the

---

1. Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, Kham prasai nuang nai wan khrob rob pi thi sorng haeng kanpatiwat (Speech Commemorating the Second Anniversary of the Revolution), 20 October, 1960, translated by the writer.

2. Writing on the characteristics of the armed forces of the developing countries Irving Louis Horowitz notes:

> "...as a general rule, the army will be more liberal in its position than either the air force or the navy; however we don't really know why this is the case. It might well be that this liberal-conservative dichotomy has nothing to do with the Third World characteristics, but it is simply a function of the land-based nature of both army and civil functions, giving to their policies a realism perhaps less present in other branches of the armed forces who are geared to operate in "unnatural" environments such as air or sea."

Irving Horowitz, Three Worlds of Development: The Theory and Practice of International Stratification, Oxford University Press, New York, 1966, pp. 273-274.

efficiency of the force. This superiority in human resources enables the Royal Thai Army to expand its roles and authority into other branches of the services, into the civil administration and ultimately into politics.

In 1963 the Royal Thai Army had a sterngth of 70,177 men.[1] Of these 34,763 were enlisted men,[2] 35,624 were non-commission officers,[3] and 8,790 were commissioned officers.[4] According to an Army source, its officers possess fairly high qualifications, namely: physical fitness, mental strength and alertness, and emotional strength.[5] The elites of the officers corps come from the Military Academy, situated in the heart of Bangkok. Nevertheless, a large number of officers are admitted from other institutions. The sources of recruitment of Army officers are as follows:

1) The Military Academy (Rongrian nairoi phra julajormklao). The Military Academy is an instution of higher learning. It provides a five-year training course. Its cadets are recruited from the armed forces preparatory school called the Military Preparatory School (Rongrian triam thahan). The Military Preparatory School

---

1. Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Kansueksa sammana kamlangphon chansung (Seminar on High-Level Manpower), Bangkok, 1963, p. 40.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. p. 69.

is an institution of high school or junior college level (grades 11 and 12). It provides two-year training for the cadets of the Army, Navy and Air Force Academies. The cadets of the Preparatory School are in turn recruited from three separate sources: first, from the graduates of M.S. 5 (grade 10) level of general education who have passed the competitive examinations; secondly, from the graduates of the Non-Commissioned Officers Schools (Rongrian naisib) who possess outstanding academic record; and thirdly, from enlisted men who are qualified under the Army regulations (i.e. with good academic records or whose fathers have rendered exceptional services to the country). After two-year studies, the students are sent to their designated Academies of the armed forces. Those who go to the Military (Army) Academy spend an additional five years of studies. After their graduation they are appointed commissioned officers.

2) The Civilians

a. University Graduates. From time to time the graduates of the universities are drafted, and appointed officers in the Army for a temporary (1-2 years) period. These graduates must have completed the courses in the Reserve Officers Training Corps which are given by the Department of the Territorial Army.[1] Prior to their appointments, various six-month programmes are given to the candidates, depending upon the branches of the Army in which they are to serve. Thereafter they are sent to Army posts according to their branches, ability or specialisations. Upon the completion of

---

1. However, unlike the American system the ROTC courses are not recognised by the university as part of the academic requirements. Interested students must study them in their spare time. The ROTC programme is entirely voluntary.

the compulsory service, these officers may volunteer to continue in the Army as commissioned officers.

b. Qualified Civilians. Civilians with qualified credentials may be appointed commissioned officers. They are men whose skills or technological expertise are needed by the service. Neverthless, these civilians must possess at least the diplomas of the recognised colleges or universities, either in Thailand or overseas.

c. Reserved Officers Academy. From time to time the Reserved Officers Academy (Rongrian nairoi samrong) is instituted to train officers for the Army. This is done when there are urgent need for a large number of officers. The cadets of the Reserved Officers Academy are recruited from three sources: firstly, from those students who have completed the M.S. 5 level of the general education (grade 12); secondly, from the graduates of the Non-Commissioned Officers Schools who possess exceptional academic records; and thirdly, from the enlisted men who are qualified under the Army regulation. The course of studies at the Reserved Officers Academy is 1½ years. The cadets are appointed commissioned officers upon their graduation. However, their services are required for only a temporary period (usually one year). They are, neverthless, permitted to apply for recommission in the regular Army as commissioned officers depending upon the need and vacancies available.[1]

1. In practice, however, all of them are recommissioned as officers. Nevertheless, their path of promotion is less smooth as the graduates of the universities or the Military Academy.

3) The Non-Commissioned Officers. Four categories of the Sergeant-majors are considered as candidates for the rank of commissioned officer: first, those who have passed the satsadi (conscription officer) courses; secondly, those who have passed the commissioned officers courses; thirdly, those who have spent long years in the service; and fourthly, those who are considered as special cases under the Army regulations.

Hence, Army officers are drawn from various segments of the population. Those who are recruited from the universities and the Military Academies represent, to some extent, the urban areas of the country; for most of the universities and the Academy are situated in Bangkok. However, due to the process of recruitment based primarily on universal competitive examinations, and the existence of good secondary schools in other parts of the country, plus the uniform nature of Thai general education under a single authority,[1] any bias in favour of the urban population is minimised. Moreover, the N.C.O. Schools which provide a number of candidates for the Military Academy tend to be rural-oriented in nature, as most of these schools are situated outside of the capital and they draw largely upon the local sources for their recruits. Thus, any

---

1. The educational system of Thailand is highly centralised and standardised. All schools, including the private and missionary schools, are under the supervision of the central government, namely the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Interior. Their courses of instruction, and examinations are prescribed by the authorities.

advantage on the part of the urban areas is further checked. Also, the officers who are drawn from the Sergeant-major cadre tend to come from the rural areas for these men are promoted from the enlisted men who in turn represent the rural population.[1] Yet there are others who are the graduates of the N.C.O. Schools. And although the Sergeant-majors may constitute a majority of this group, they represent a minority in the whole entire officer corps. According to Army policy, the aim of the department is to have 66 per cent of its commissioned officers drawn from the graduates of the Military Academy and the N.C.O. Schools, 20 per cent from the universities and 20 per cent from the Reserved Officers Academy and those who came through the ranks of Sergeant-major, and others.[2]

Hence it may be concluded that Army officers are drawn from a wide part of the population. The same may be said of the civil bureaucracy[3] whose main source of officials is the universities.

---

1. In 1962 the Army conscripted 250,860 men. Of these, 84,529 were from the First Army Area (Bangkok and other near-by areas); 85,243 from the Second Army Area; 50,247 from the Third Army Area; and 30,841 from the Fifth Military Province. Department of the Army, Seminar on High-Level Manpower, p. 54.

2. Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Ekkasan kiawkab prachakorn (Documents Concerning the Population), Bangkok, 1963, p. 69.

3. In his study of the Thai elite H.D. Evers argues that since 1932 members of the Thai bureaucracy have been increasingly drawn from men of official background and that there are "indications that the bureaucratic elite is developing into a social class" (p. 1). However, since this theory is based primarily on a small number of high ranking officials in a few selected government ministries it is far from conclusive. As Professor Evers himself admitted, his study "is not to prove a thesis but to show that my hypothesis is worthwhile considering and that research along these lines might provide some insight into changing Thai society" (p. 30). H.D. Evers, The Formation of Social Class Structure: Urbanisation, Bureaucratisation and Social Mobility in Thailand, Monash University, Melbourne, 1965, (mimeographed).

Whereas the Army bias in favour of the urban is somewhat off-set by the presence of those who come from the non-commissioned ranks, the tendency of the universities to draw upon the urban population is, to some degree, off-set by the presence of the good secondary schools in the rural areas and, since 1960 the emergence of the provincial universities.[1] The system of universal competitive examinations also helps a country boy to obtain higher education, which still remains inexpensive. To a large extent, the Army and the civil bureaucracy do not draw upon the same human material. This is due to various reasons. Firstly, only 20 per cent (at the most) of the university graduates are accepted into the Army. Secondly, the highly specialised nature of Thai education tends to leave little room for transfer from one organisation into the other. Thirdly, although the Military Academy and the universities draw upon the same pool of the graduates of the M.S. 3 (Grade 10) for its preparatory schools (M.S. 4 and 5 for the universities, and the Rongrian nairoi thahan for the Academy) the two institutions by no means possess any categorical recruitment policies, being influenced by the same bureaucratic inertia. In addition, the supply of the graduates always far exceeds the demand. For example, in 1963 only

---

1. The provincial muang or cities in Thailand are rural in most characteristics. Only Bangkok and Thonburi can be truly classified as cities in the academic sense.

17.96 of the M.S. 5 graduates were accepted by the universities.[1] In 1964, the percentage increased to 39.88 and in 1965 rose to 57.97.[2] In 1964 only 21,230 out of 137,843 graduates of M.S. 3 level went on to the M.S. 4 and M.S. 5 levels.[3] With this huge supply and limited demand, the Academy and the universities are under no pressure to compete for recruits.

Although under the Civil Service Act of 1928 (amended 1954) a civilian official of certain rank and grade may be legally transferred to a military position of similar rank and grade, and vice versa, in practice this seldom happens. A main obstacle to the interchangeability between the military and the bureaucracy is procedural. In view of the fact that the transfer entails burdensome bureaucratic redtape, which jeopardises opportunity for promotion and prejudices seniority, and the like, there are few candidates for transfer. Moreover, the limited number of positions available makes the switch even more difficult. Hence bureaucrats, civil or military, tend to stay and advance within their own organisations. The Civil Service Regulations regarding the transfer merely reflect the absence of clear-cut civil-military distinction in Thai history.

---

1. Government of Thailand, The National Economic Development Board, Phaen phathanakan setthakit lae sangkhom haeng chat chabab thi sorng 2510-2514 (The Second National Economic and Social Development Plan), Bangkok, 1967, p. 257.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 258.

A source of the Army's organisational strength lies in its appreciation of simplicity, directness, clarity, and technology. However similar to other organisations in its outward appearances, Army administration is unique in its cultivation of simple concepts and terminologies designed to be comprehended quickly and with minimal misunderstandings. Organisation charts, illustrations, symbols, and abbreviations, indicating chains of command, lines of action, numbers of goals and problems to be tackled and the like abound. These tend to assure the organisation of a better-than-average performance relative to other institutions. Constant supervision, training, and inspection which are the core of the peace-time war machine also contribute to the favourable output of the Thai Army.

III. Education and Ideology

Nowhere else in the Thai bureaucracy would one find as extensive an educational system as exists in the armed forces. The Army, being the largest and most powerful branch, can boast of an impressive training programme. Funds, equipment, and personnel are more readily available to schools and colleges of the Army whose alumni occupy powerful positions in the government. The Navy, by contrast, is the least fortunate of the three services, being the loser in the past political power struggles. Modelled largely after its American counterparts, the RTA schools range from those offering specialised training in a specific field of service or technical specialty, i.e, the Infantry, the Signals, the Artillery, etc., to those such as the Military Preparatory School, the Military Academy,

the Command and General Staff College, and the Army War College. Through these schools officers receive continuously more advanced education. In addition to Army training course, selected officers are sent to study at other institutions, including the universities.[1] Aside from the Army War College, the highest school of the Army, officers of proved calibre are given opportunities to further their education in the Armed Forces Staff College, the Navy or Air Force Staff College, and ultimately in the National Defence College. (See Appendix 4). According to Army regulations, a selected officer may continue his studies after he already reached general-grade. A Thai Army officer may still be studying even at the near-retirement age of 54.[2]

The Army's extensive educational system is by no means exclusively for a small minority. Even the not-so-talented officers are assured of adequate training in specific areas. Specialised instruction is moreover not confined to the combatant or technological such as tank warfare or telecommunications, but also extends to the social sciences such as management, social psychology, and public administration. The Directorate of Command

---

1. Chiefly at the National Institute of Development Administration (formerly the Institute of Public Administration of Thammasat University) where they work for a post-graduate degree in Public Administration, Economic Development, or Advanced Statistics.

2. Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Laksut withayalai porngkan ratchaanajak (Prospectus of the National Defence College), Bangkok, 1968, (mimeographed), p. 1.

and Operations, for instance, supervises courses in Psychological Warfare at numerous levels.[1] The School of the Adjutant General Department offers subjects in Public and Personnel Administration and Management. As for the talented few, their education is advanced and sophisticated. To maintain a high standard, rigorous examinations and selection processes are imposed. For example, it is indicated that candidates for the Army General Staff College must be able to demonstrate not only a high level of intelligence but also moral and financial integrity. Applicants are thereby obliged to submit full records of their personal debts to be approved by their superiors prior to taking the entrance examinations.[2] Regarding the curriculum, officers are instructed not only in military science and planning, which are a normal part of recent American methods, but also in subjects such as International Relations, Western Philosophy, Economics, and the like. These courses are designed to prepare students for top command posts as well as to familiarise them with a wide range of domestic and international problems. Many of these academic subjects, usually concise in content and diluted to a somewhat mediocre level, are

---

1. Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Nayobai kanjadha lae banju kamlangphon pi 2509-2514 (Manpower Procurement Policy: 1963-1971), Bangkok, 1963, (mimeographed), p. 15.

2. Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Prakat korngthabbok rueng kanrabsamak bukkhon khaw pen nakrian rongrian senathiken thahanbok (Announcement Concerning Candidates for the Command and General Staff College), Bangkok, 1967, Appendix a.

nevertheless received with enthusiasm by the officers.[1] At the National Defence College, the highest defence educational institution, these men[2] are taught the post-graduate level courses such as International Law, Economic Development, Demography, and Comparative Politics, along with other subjects concerning national security. The aims of this training are clearly expressed in the prospectus of the college:

> The courses of studies at the National Defence College are designed to meet the changing world situation and to correspond with the Government's policies in an era of national development. For the purposes of putting the College on the same footing with similar institutions around the world, and of achieving fuller success in respect to the national security, many subjects have been updated. It is the College's goal that its students be instructed thoroughly in the technology of national defence, be informed about the rapidly changing world affairs, and be efficiently prepared for the tasks of high level command and planning.
>
> ...Since 1965 a new course in Economics has been introduced to conform with the Government's most important policy of uplifting the national economy and improving the people's living standard. This especially-designed course is called Economic Planning with Reference to National Security. This recent improvement is patterned after the United States College of Military Industries which places great emphasis on economic activity. Its purpose is to enable the students to understand and appreciate the value of economic power, to bear in mind the significance of economic, political, military and

---

1. Between 1965-1966 the writer was appointed special instructor at the Army Psychological Warfare School, the Naval Psychological Warfare School, the Air Force Staff College, and the Police Academy. This statement is based on his observation.

2. Students who are members of the armed forces or the Police must be of Special Colonel (Brigadier) or general rank, or the equivalent.

> social-psychological factors in the national defence. It is hoped that after this instruction the students would be able to assess competently the capability of government administration, its economic situation and productivity, and its policies, planning and operation.[1]

Army officers compose the major group at the National Defence College. It is carefully arranged that all class chairmanships go to Army men. At the College they live and work with men of other services and high-ranking civil officials. They are consequently given a first-hand opportunity to learn about civilian affairs and problems. It should be noted that most Army politicians who occupy key posts in the present Thai government are graduates of the National Defence College.[2]

It would be difficult to deny the profound effect of Army education on its officer corps. Constant training in various specialised aspects of modern warfare is likely to produce a sense of professionalism and an achievement-oriented outlook. Division of labour, supervision, and information all serve the organisation well in the course of bureaucratic politics and in the execution of a military coup. The non-military knowledge is likely to stir the officers' interests beyond their military affairs and broaden their view of the world. Admittedly, Thai officers have always been highly politicised, this type of training nevertheless tends to

---

1. Government of Thailand, The National Defence College, Rainam naksueksa witthayalai porngkan ratchaanajak tangtae chut nueng thueng chut thi paet (Prospectus and Names of Students of the National Defence College), Printing Press of the Department of Military Survey, Bangkok, 1965, (unpaged).

2. The Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Police Director General belong to the same class of 1956.

perpetuate and even intensify their political consciousness. At times it also confuses the officers as to the true nature of their defence duties. Some military men are inclined to exaggerate their competence and knowledge of the national affairs.[1] Consequently Thai officers are exceedingly impatient about what they consider civilian indecisiveness or ineptitude. Since soldiers are technocrats by nature, their image of an efficient government is that by the experts. Democratic political processes based on discussion, compromise, and diverse interests are regarded as ineffective or outright evil. A slight sign of political conflict or tension is sufficient to trigger army intervention. Behind this puritan view of politics and impatience lies the fact that Thai officers consider themselves capable of understanding the national problems. This self-confidence may be due to the extensive political education received in the staff colleges and taught largely by civilian professors.[2]

Army education has produced a peculiar semblance of political ideology. This is largely characterised by a sense of commitment to the national interests initiated and inculcated in the academy. Intensive indoctrination and rigid discipline are among the contributors to the Army's self-image - its identification with

---

1. For example, this self-confidence prompted Colonel Kaj Kajsongkhram to draft the constitution of 1947.

2. No less than ten professors and lecturers at the Faculty of Political Science of Chulalongkorn University teach in various staff colleges of the armed forces and in the Police Academy.

the national polity and glory. The Army's self-image may be illustrated by a speech made by Field Marshal Thanom Kittikhajorn during a parade of troops:

> All civilised nations of the world recognise that the armed forces not only represent the integrity of independent countries, but are also an important source of power in the execution of the national policies, in the national defence, and for the national automomy. Only independent states are able to maitain national armies. For many hundred years past, the Thai armed forces have played a vital role in the maintenance of the nation's sovereignty. Their heroic deeds have been recorded in our history. Therefore all Thai soldiers should be proud of their armies. They should take pride in the heroism of their warrior ancestors. Likewise all Thai patriotic citizens should be aware of our national independence. They should uphold and support the armed forces in the manner befitting their position of an indispensable source of our national power.[1]

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the Thai military ideology is not motivated by any specific political or economic doctrine or by any religious school of thought. Nor is it represented by a formal organisation within the Army. Whereas the military governments of Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan, and a number of their counterparts in the Middle East are oriented towards various shades of Socialism, the Thai military is more vague and flexible in its political beliefs.

This may be broadly explained in terms of the Army's devotion to national survival. The RTA sees itself as the symbol of national honour, defender of national integrity, and executor of national interests. Unlike armies in democratic countries, the

---

1. Field Marshal Thanom Kittikhajorn, Owat nai phithi tham sat patiyan ton tor thongchai chaloemphon (Speech on the Occasion of the Pledging of Oath to the Colours), 8 November, 1963, translated by the writer.

Thai counterpart seems unable to distinguish between the military and non-military spheres of national affairs. They are so intertwined as to make the differences appear insignificant. What seems more important is the position of the Army in the survival issue. Where will the Army be ranked in the conduct of national interests? Regardless of the differences of government policies at various times, one thing is clear - the Army must be the front-runner in the pursuit of national well-being and glory. Army and country are inseparable, and what is good for the first is good for the latter. As General Praphat Jarusathian, the Army Commander-in-Chief, puts it:

> From time immemorial the development of the Army was indistinguishable from the evolution of the Thai people. Throughout our long history the Army has played a major part in the defence of the Kingdom. At the height of our national expansion, the Army represented not only the survival but also the greatness of the Thai nation.[1]

Since the Army considers itself at the very least first among equals, the concept of military subordination to the civil authority is naturally unacceptable. And since Thai politics has been merely a struggle for power among bureaucratic agencies, the Army has not had difficulties in bringing about its political goals. Consequently, it has no reason to doubt the validity of its belief. Army "ideology" is also characterised by its commitment to modernity and progress, the symbol of national glory. This outlook is inculcated at an early stage into its members' characters

---

1. Department of the Army, Combat Organisation, p. 1.

in the academy. The highest ideals prescribed by the Army Academy are said to be the love of duty, the love of honour, and the love of nation.[1] (See Appendix 5). In the course of their five-year training, Army cadets spend a total of 92 hours studying military psychology and leadership.[2] Many hundreds of hours are used for combat drills and physical training, which emphasise action and decisiveness. In addition, cadets are required to attend sermons delivered by the college chaplain or invited guests.[3] These lectures naturally centre around the topics of ideal character, nationalism, and national glory. These simple virtues instilled by Army education undoubtedly invoke in the officer corps a sense of pride and superiority. Moral self-confidence, aggressiveness, and nationalism are the main ingredients of the so-called Army ideology.

IV. Political Resources

Due to the fact that in Thailand there is no well-organised politically oriented institution outside the bureaucracy,[4] the Army, the largest and best equipped group has no serious competitors.

---

1. Wilson, p. 187.
2. Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Laksut rongrian nairoi phrajulajormklao pi nueng thueng ha (The Curriculum of the Military Academy), Bangkok, 1968, (mimeographed).
3. Ibid.
4. For further information on the absence of interest groups in Thailand see Fred W. Riggs, "Interest and Clientele Groups," in Joseph L. Sutton, ed., Problems of Politics and Administration in Thailand, Department of Government, Indiana University, 1962, pp. 153-192.

In the game of bureaucratic politics the Army usually comes out on top. Where force or the threat of force is relevant, the Army has been particularly successful. Yet when might is no longer applicable the Army faces stiff obstacles. Some bureaucratic agencies have attempted to check military abuse and power through the use of legalism, administrative redtape, evasion, and the like. And since the Thai military, perhaps due to its bureaucratic nature, has been particularly mindful of a pseudo-legalism,[1] the tactic of using administrative burden to resist its pressure has been useful. Thus, at times the Army found itself hopelessly entangled with legalistic problems. At other times it is frustrated by "technical advice," particularly in finance and economics. The Governor of the Bank of Thailand, for instance, has been critical of the government, using his position to "express forcibly an attitude dictated by financial requirements." [2] Others like him have managed to enlist the pressure of foreign institutions to strengthen their position against military power:

> The first is the tendency for the bureaucrats to mobilise foreign pressures to frustrate the private interests of the power elite. Many of the aspects of Thailand's economy which can be described as liberal are the result of such mobilisation. The most important influences are those of the International Bank and the

---

1. Since 1932, a most immediate task for all the coup parties after the successful take-over was to pass an "act to indemnify the promoters of the coup d'etat," an action which shows their pre-occupation with legalism.

2. T.H. Silcock, ed., Thailand: Social and Economic Studies in Development, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1967, p. 180.

> International Monetary Fund...In addition, several of the advisory missions sent to Thailand by the United States Operations Mission have been at least partly initiated by foreign-trained Thai civil servants wishing to initiate reforms.[1]

Among the organisations which have succeeded in some measure in checking the influence of the Army is the Bureau of the Budget. The Bureau of the Budget (Samnak ngobpraman) is an agency under the Prime Minister's Office. Before 1960 it was an organisation within the Ministry of Finance. Since its transfer to the Prime Minister's Office, the Bureau has expanded substantially both in size and power. This was partly due to its important role in the planning of national economic development, and partly to the integrity of its civilian director. "The Budget Bureau," stated a Thai journalist, "is a good example of the intervention of experts."[2] Insisting on immaculate budgetary procedure, strict regulations, and the like, the Bureau has gained "a number of enemies"[3] within the bureaucracy. Some of its opponents accused its director of obstructionism.[4] Several influential military officers demanded his expulsion.[5] But since any move against the Bureau's director

---

1. H.D. Evers and T.H. Silcock, "Elites and Selection," in Silcock, ed., p. 97.
2. Siam Rat Weekly, Vol. 15, No.52, 15 June, 1969, p. 13.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 42.

may be interpreted as having some ulterior motive and would undoubtedly antagonise the bureaucracy, it was deemed unwise. A reason for the Budget Bureau's "interference" in the government process is said to be as follows:

> The damaging manner in which the government handles the public funds has caused the Budget Bureau to react. As a good citizen and good official, the Bureau could not tolerate the situation. Subsequently, it had to exercise all its authority. It put severe restrictions on budgetary matters. It demanded a part in the conclusion of construction contracts between government agencies and private corporations. Hence, it interfered with the operation of other agencies. At times, it even became the government itself, exercising the policy making power on behalf of the government. All was the result of the (unfortunate) circumstances.[1]

The growing dependence on and tolerance toward civilians stem from several factors. First, the military has committed itself to the national development programme on a large scale, the task of which can not be accomplished without the aid of the technocrats. Secondly, the close collaboration between the technocrats and the military at the top level which has been in progress for a decade since 1958 has proved to be to the military's advantage. Hence the officers may feel that they have to pay a price for this arrangment. Thirdly, in dealing with the foreign powers or foreign agencies, civilian representatives are necessary, if not altogether essential. They provide the régime with experience and expertise in technically complicated matters. Although some brilliant members of the ruling military, General Sawaeng Senanarong, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, General Net Khemayothin, Chairman of the National Research

---

1. Ibid., translated by the writer.

Council, and Air Chief Marshal Thawi Julasab, the Minister of Communications, for instance, may be able to assume those roles without much difficulty, they lack the advantage of the civilians. The government is aware of the fact that some foreign agencies such as the foundations, feel ill at ease when confronted with the officers. Others (some United States senators, for example) are biased against the army. The civilian "front man" is thus useful in smoothing the atmosphere for fruitful negotiations. Some distinguished technocrats - Dr. Puey Unpakorm, the Governor of the Bank of Thailand, for instance - provide the régime with credibility and respectability in the eyes of the foreigners. Others, such as Dr. Thanat Khoman and Mr. Pote Sarasin, are able spokesmen in the international arena. During the past decade this group of competent civilians has become an indispensable part of the military government in this age of all-embracing international relations.

What Robert Dahl calls the "political resources" of the Thai Army are largely derived from three areas: the control of human resources, the capture and manipulation of communications, and management and exploitation of Army enterprises and other economic activities.

Control of Human Resources

Unlike the Navy and the Air Force, the arms of the Army extend to most provinces in the country. Aside from military garrisons situated at strategic places, the Army is empowered to recruit able-bodied men to serve in its corps. This power is its ancient right long preceding the Conscription Act of 1903.[1] With the

1. This Act has been replaced by the Conscription Act of 1954.

exception of some communes in ten provinces (mostly near the sea) under the jurisdiction of the Navy and/or the Air Force, the Army has the sole authority to draft qualified males throughout the kingdom. In 1960, the Army recruited 64,289 men for active service.[1] To most villagers military conscription is certainly the most burdensome duty affecting them every year. This symbol of governmental power is represented predominantly by the Army. In Thailand the supply of men for conscription normally far exceeds the demand (for example, in 1961 only 56,801 out of 246,413 eligible males were drafted).[2] The Army is thus in a position to have as its new members not only a cross-section of the population but also the best talents available.

The effect of military service, the term of which is two years, on the recruits and on society at large is profound. In former times, joining the Army was a dreaded duty and it was not uncommon for villagers to run away or dodge service in other ways. Even at the present about two per cent of the draftees annually escape the conscription.[3] Yet reforms since 1903 have made army life more pleasant and even attractive. The modernisation of the military and the presence of the officers in high political positions are attributable to its improved image.

During the conscription men are indoctrinated in patriotism and the military spirit. For most recruits, it is the only

---

1. Department of the Army, Seminar on High-level Manpower, p. 87.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

occasion that they have left the villages and come into contact with men from other parts of the country. Through the service they have come to know the urban way of life and its materialistic subculture. They are trained, perhaps for the first time, to handle mechanical equipment and some sophisticated weapons. This exposure to the modern life plus the acquisition of information hitherto unavailable to them are likely to make considerable impact on the outlook of the conscript and of their fellow villagers.[1] The uniform and constant indoctrination have tended to evoke the feeling of pride in the Army and the allegiance to one's unit. Hence, men who were formerly isolated from all sources of political influence are now aware of their association with the most formidable organisation in the land. Army experience and esprit de corps may help to promote or instill a favourable attitude towards the government by the military.

Nevertheless, the Army itself is far from monolithic. Groups and factions exist within the service. By and large they fall into two main categories: those which are divided on the basis of political or personal allegiance, and those on a regional or technical basis.

The first type has been described in our earlier analysis.

---

1. John E. de Young, Village Life in Modern Thailand, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955, p. 60.

They are composed of Army officers whose interests extend beyond the realm of the military. They are bound together around one, or possibly two or three, leaders through the intricate web of personal relationships of various sorts - economic, political and social. They are politically oriented groups and exist primarily for the purpose of political (and economic) action. Among such groups are the Song-Prasart-Ritthi and the Phibun-Thadsanai-Prayoon groups of 1932-1938,[1] the Phibun ("politico-military") group of 1938-1957,[2] the Coup d'Etat Group of 1947, and the Sarit ("military-technocratic-intellectual") group of the late 1950's to 1963.

The second category follows regional and career lines. Within the closed Army circle a Bangkok versus provinces dichotomy can be observed.[3] This is due mainly to the fact that most of the political struggle and patronage are confined within the capital. Officers in different regions thus tend to form their own separate groups, and view the Bangkok (the First Army) troops as the privileged. However, this feeling of regionalism is by no means strong or permanent as the top echelon commanders are rotated frequently. With the exception of the 1933 counter-coup episode, there has not been any indication of a serious division between the rural-based and the urban-based Army.

---

1. See Chapter II.
2. See Chapters III and IV.
3. This observation is based on the writer's personal experience in the Royal Thai Army (1957-1959).

In addition, groups and factions may form along the lines of their specialisation. For example, there exists noticeable groups among the Infantry, the Cavalry, and the Artillery. Officers of the same branches of the service tend to have a special loyalty towards their comrades of the same service. And consequently a web of intimate relationship, the seed of group solidarity, emerges. As an illustration, Field Marshal Phibun was an Artillery officer and some of his closest associates were from that branch. When he was ousted in 1944 following the defeat in the National Assembly, Phibun sought refuge in the Artillery Centre (Sun kan thahan puenyai) at Lopburi.[1] There he was consoled, encouraged and given pledges of support by his fellow artillery men. And it was reported that Phibun was plotting a coup d'etat with the aid of artillery officers.[2] Another case may be seen from the intimate relationship between Sarit, Thanom and Praphat,[3] all of whom were Infantry officers.

Groups or factions of the last category are blurred and fragile as they are too rigid and based primarily on sentiment. Those which are organised (or came into being) for the purpose of political action are more cohesive and durable. Nevertheless, groups and factions in the Army are formed mostly along the horizontal line. This may be due to the absence of strong ideological links among

---

1. Jarun Kuwanon, Chiwit kantorsu khorng jormphon por phibunsongkhram (Life of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram), Agsorn Jaroenthat Press, Bangkok, 1953, pp. 266-269.

2. Ibid., p. 266.

3. Thanom and Praphat were considered by Sarit as his "right arm and left arm," Thai Noi, Nayokrathamontri khon thi sibet kab sam phunam patiwat (The Eleventh Premier and Three Leaders of the Coup d'Etat), Phrae Phitaya Press, Bangkok, 1964, p. 451.

members of the group. It is probably due to the all important role of the social status in the relationship between individuals - the superior (phu yai) and inferior (phu noi), the old and the young, the weak and the strong, etc. - which is the core of the Thai social system.[1] Without a leader there are no followers.

Manipulation of Communications

Army organisation possesses an excellent channel of communication which is a most vital political resource. Ready access to the state's highly confidential information is also available to the force. In the past important information and secure communication networks enabled the Army to stage numerous successful coups. Its efficient intelligence apparatus were instrumental in the suppression (or containment) of dissident groups. Through its centres throughout the country the Army is able to co-ordinate action. It is noteworthy that the Thai Army, of all the bureaucracies, maintains a large network of communications and information not only in the country but also abroad. In addition to the intelligence departments at the regional headquarters there are 22 Army Attaché Offices in 21 countries. (See Appendix 6). Hence the Royal Thai Army is not merely the most aggressive of all the political groups, but probably the best-informed as well.

Military Enterprises

A peculiar aspect of the government of Thailand is characterised

---

1. Lucian M. Hanks, Jr., and Herbert P. Phillips, "A Young Thai From the Countryside," in B. Kaplan, ed., Studying Personality Crossculturally, Row, Peterson and Co., Evanston, Illinois, 1961, pp. 637-656.

by the fact that its Ministries, departments, and organisations are given the status of a legal person. Thai government agencies are thus able to enter into legal contact with the private organisations or persons.[1] Consequently, various kinds of economic enterprises are managed by the government ministries. Such enterprises are conducted either as a competitive private business or as a monopoly. The Defence Ministry is among those agencies which exercise a wide range of economic activities.[2] In 1965, the Ministry of Defence and its War Veterans Organisation either owned or held substantial shares in 15 "private" companies.[3] The nature of their business ranged from oil refining, textile spinning, bottle manufacturing, ship repairing, to construction contracting. (See Appendix 7). In addition, the Defence Ministry is a major shareholder of the Military Bank, which operates as a commercial bank.[4] Since the Army dominates the Defence Ministry, it is not surprising that key positions in these companies are often given to Army officers.

Army units in Bangkok and provincial headquarters also engage in radio broadcasting. This commercial wireless operates under a

---

1. Wilson, p. 184.

2. Other major departments which engage in economic enterprises are the Ministry of Industries (19 companies) and the Ministry of Finance (16 companies).

3. Robert J. Muscat, Development Strategy in Thailand, Frederick A. Praeger, New York and London, 1966, p. 296.

4. Wilson, p. 184.

disguise of "experimental stations". Most prominent among which are the broadcasting stations of the Signal Corps, the Territorial Army, the Tank Division, the Anti-Aircraft Regiment, and the First Army. The Signal Corps administers one of the three major television stations. It is called Army T.V. (Thorathat korngthabbok).[1] Through these networks of the mass media the Army puts across its view to the public as well as provides for information and entertainment. Undoubtedly, in time of need they are converted to an instrument of political action, the so-called silent coup (or "Radio Coup") of 1951 being an example. And since these broadcasting stations are permitted to function as commercial companies, they compete with other broadcasters and newspapers for advertisements and profits. Hitherto their activities have been expanded beyond the ad hoc basis. The First Army Station, for instance, began its business with one channel and is now operating on three separate channels simultaneously.

Army enterprises enable the officers to augment income either through non-Army positions or by co-operating with private firms or individuals. Attractive posts in important companies owned br controlled by the Ministry of Defence and the War Veterans Organisation (as well as those which belong to other government departments) are

---

1. The Ministry of Education, the Air Force, the Navy, the Police Department, the King's Palace, Kasetsat, Thammasat and Chulalongkorn Universities also operate radio broadcasting. However, their staff, funds, and hours of transmission cannot match those of the Army.

effectively exploited by the military. They are an ideal instrument of political rewards inherent in the Thai governmental system.

Wealth is a formidable source of political influence. High ranking officers, especially those in the Army and the Police, were quick to realise this. Men who came to power through the coups needed economic foundations to strengthen their rule. This they found abundantly in the Chinese business community. With the exception of few families drawn mostly from the royal descendants, the Chinese constitute the major group possessing great economic power. On the other hand, Chinese business leaders, though endowed with financial affluence, lacked the social prestige. Socially, they were excluded almost entirely from the Thai elite. The Chinese, moreover, needed protection from police harassments and extortions. Close contact or collaboration with the Thai leaders thus provided them with both prestige and security. It also facilitated their enterprises and gave them an advantage over their business rivals. For example, such associations were helpful in obtaining government licenses, permits and the like. Socially, contact with the Thai elites enhanced the Chinese's status. "Most of the Chinese leaders boasted of their connexions with Thai officials, knowing them to be a source of power and prestige. In dealing with the Thai, moreover, the Chinese leaders gain a fuller appreciation of the advantage of a more Thai orientation and a taste of what full acceptance by the Thai elite could mean."[1] These

1. G. William Skinner, Leadership and Power in the Chinese Community of Thailand, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1958 p. 244.

mutual interests - the desire for wealth by the Thais and the need for protection and social recognition by the Chinese - expedited the collaboration between the two groups. Consequently, many Thai officers, most of whom Army and Police generals, were appointed to the boards of directors of Chinese or Chinese-oriented companies. In return, the Chinese leaders were brought into the social circles of the Thais.[1]

After the defeat of the Police in the 1957 Army coup, powerful police officers such as General Phao and his lieutenants were driven out of the country. Some were brought to trial on various charges including political assassination. Others were removed from the business boards as they no longer could provide protection. The Army has since played the dominant role in the Thai-Chinese business alliance. Army leaders especially Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, General (Field Marshal) Thanom Kittikhajorn, and General Praphat Jarusathian, were reported (in 1966) to have been on the boards of 27, 20, and 20 business companies respectively.[2] No less than 20 Army officers were members of the boards of directors

---

1. Skinner writes, for example: "...When Leader Yang's brother married the daughter of his protégé Leader Huang, Field Marshal Phin poured the lustral water. In April 1953, Field Marshal Phin publicly proposed that Leader Yang be appointed a member of the Thai National Economic Council. When Field Marshal Phin's wife died in March 1955, Leader Yang and protégés played a prominent role in the extensive funeral ceremonies." Ibid., p. 308.

2. Fred W. Riggs, Thailand: The Modernisation of a Bureaucratic Polity, East-West Centre Press, Honolulu, 1966, p. 274.

of leading firms.[1] This practice was confined exclusively within the top ranking officers.

Three types of board membership of Army officers and their relationships with other ruling powers can be evaluated:

1. Memberships in the Chinese Business Boards. In trying to come to terms with the Thai ruling elite the Chinese entrepreneurs invited the Thai leaders to become members of their boards of directors. In this way the Thais were able to augment "legal" income[2] in the form of fees, bonuses, honouraria, or even salaries. At the beginning, membership of a board included few important figures in the government. All too often Police officers played an important role in these boards. For the Police had, by virtue of their work, the power of issuing permits, checking business irregularities and keeping alien registrations, etc., not to mention the power of making arrests and imprisonments. Since the enactment of the Un-Thai (anti-Communist) Activities Act of 1952, the Police were given increasing authority over the Chinese as the Police were responsible for enforcing the law. "It is the easiest thing in the world," stated a Thai newspaper, "to bleed Chinese in our country. Merely preferring a charge of being communist or having communist tendencies is more than sufficient for members of the police to obtain huge sum of money from them as they please."[3]

---

1. Ibid., pp. 291-292.
2. The salaries of Thai officers are very low comparing with those of the same rank in nearby Malaysia. The monthly salary of a captain is from 1,300 baht (£26) to 2,000 baht (£40); a major from 2,650 baht (£52) to 3,600 baht (£72); a colonel from 3,800 baht (£76) to 4,600 baht (£92); and a general from 5,700 baht (£114) to 8,600 baht (£172).
3. Sathiraphap, 31 August, 1955, cited in Skinner, pp. 303-304.

With the power of the Police, and their appetite, growing, the Chinese leaders felt compelled to invite other members of the elite to their business boards so as to check the Police power. In an increasing number, Army officers whose official duties did not relate directly to the Chinese, but whose political ties and prestige were enormous, were appointed members of Chinese business boards. Through their political power and influence, some Army officers provided the Chinese with protection from the Police extortion:

> ...subsequent to the major 1952-1953 anti-Communist raids, about a dozen Chinese leaders of some influence, along with scores of other Chinese businessmen, were either interrogated, arrested, or saw their businesses raided by the Thai police. Those who fared poorly - whether the charges were political or economic in nature - for the most part had no or inadequate business ties with the Thai elite. When the two Chinese directors of the Union Bank were brought before the police in April 1954 to explain foreign exchange irregularities, Leader Chou with the backing of General Sarit Thanarat and other key officials came through unscathed, while Leader Liu, with no cemented business ties in the inner circles of the new Thai elite, was badly burned.[1]

According to Skinner, the Army and the Police appear to have played the most important part in this Thai-Chinese business alliance. However, other members of the ruling circle, including civilian officials, were also included:

> The largest and most powerful of these Sino-Thai business blocs turns out to be merely an expansion of the Ayuttha Bloc...In addition to Leaders Yang, Huang, Hsiao, and So, it includes one Thai whose interests are primarily in business, together with Police Director-General Phao (and wife and brother), Field Marshal Phin (and son), General Sarit Thanarat, Police Colonel Adun

---

1. Ibid., p. 304.

> Adundetjarat, Police Lieutenant-General Luang Phichitthurakan, Lieutenant-Colonel Phra Prajonpatjanuek and Major-General Siri Siriyothin. The Thai members of this bloc - including as they do the triumvirate which engineered the November 1951 coup d'etat plus the Minister of Economic Affairs - constitute an extremely powerful of the new Thai elite.[1]

With this type of arrangement, Army officers were only a part of the ruling group and had to co-operate or compete with other officials for their benefits. Often this resulted in a clash between Army and Police leaders; the animosity between Sarit and Phao is a case in point. The rivalry stemming from conflict of interests in the Chinese boards of directors reached its climax in the post general election period of 1957 when the Army found excellent excuses to get rid of the Police influence through the coup d'etat of September, 1957.

II. Memberships in the Executive Boards of Government Enterprises. Following Field Marshal Phibun's takeover in 1949, there emerged a campaign of Thai economic nationalism. This 'Thai-ification' economic programme was intended to put the country's economy into the hands of Thai nationals.[2] However, since the Thais were either uninterested in business matters or were short of capital the government set up various "semi-private" corporations to compete with the Chinese. These ventures were put under various government agencies, i.e. the Ministry of Defence, the Prime

---

1. Ibid., p. 306.

2. G. William Skinner, Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1957, Chapter IX.

Minister's Office, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, etc. In 1957 there was a total of 141 enterprises managed by various government departments.[1] However, most of the directors of these boards are officers of the armed forces. Because these enterprises were under the government itself, they did not need any Police protection. The Police officers were thus a minority in this arrangement. And since Army officers constituted the majority of the ruling elite, they were naturally given the largest shares. In this set-up a sizeable number of civilian officials were also included. Consequently, there was a high degree of co-operation between Army officers and civilian technocrats. As a matter of fact, in practice the officers merely presided over the boards, leaving most of the real power to the civilians.

According to the report of the International Bank mission to Thailand the power over the government corporations "is nominally in the hands of Boards of Directors...but the effective direction is exercised by permanent officials of the Ministries, with the factory managers having little authority."[2] Not surprisingly most of these enterprises operated with heavy losses. This was largely due to the fact that "the enterprises were too often initiated by persons with political influence, who had no special knowledge of the industry or particular concern about ultimate success."[3]

---

1. Riggs, p. 305.
2. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, A Public Development for Thailand, The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1959, pp. 90-91.
3. Ibid.

Whatever the true causes of the failure may have been, government corporations provided an excellent source of income for Army officers, with civilian officials acting largely as their managers.[1]

III. The Officers' Private Enterprises. The accumulation of wealth did not end at the Chinese boards of directors. Nor did the benefits gained from manipulating the semi-government enterprises satisfy the officers. Seeing what could be done in business through the use of political connexions and bribes by the Chinese, some Army and Police officers organised their own corporations, needless to say, with the assistance of the Chinese businessmen. Two men, Police General Phao and Field Marshal Sarit, became the front runners in this venture. Phao's businesses included banks, hotels nightclubs, construction companies, and insurance syndicates. Sarit's business empire covered banks, matches monopoly, construction contracting companies, shipping companies, and insurance business.[2] This private enterprise provided the general with enormous direct influence over their followers. Frequently they led to the conflicts between the middle and low-level officers belonging to opposing factions. Such tension prompted Field Marshal Phibun to

---

1. In point of fact, the real managers behind most of these corporations were Chinese as most Thai bureaucrats did not have experience or business insight. For example, since the conception of the Pork Syndicate Monopoly Corporation (Borisat thahan samakkhi kha sat) in 1952 under the chairmanship of General Phin, all of the butchering of pigs (upward of 1,200 daily) and their distribution in Bangkok were monopolised by the Corporation whose directors were two Chinese business leaders, Yang and Huang. The same was true with the Thai Gold Syndicate, Thai Financial Syndicate, and other similar companies, Skinner, Leadership and Power, pp.196-199.
2. Some of which bore his family name such as Rajata Shipping, Rajata Stone, and Rajata Construction Contractor.

issue a warning in 1955 that government officials "should not engage in business affecting the general economy of the nation and the lives of the people."[1] Yet the practice persisted and since the downfall of the Police in 1957 the Army has been the frontrunner in this enterprise. Because of this, top Army leaders were able to supplement the income of key officers, mostly military commanders in and around Bangkok, in exchange for their allegiance. The co-operation of the civilian officials was made smooth and enthusiastic through financial incentives. Rewards and bribes were employed to ensure the support of many Assemblymen, or to restrain them from making sensitive public criticism. Talented editors and journalists were recruited to manage various newspapers and magazines owned by Army generals. These publications continued despite heavy financial losses. Key figures in the Air Force and the Navy were brought in to share the profits, and thus a stake in the régime. Hence, it can be fairly concluded that the Army, more than any political group in Thailand, has mobilised its resources to the utmost advantage. Army officers have succeeded in translating their political influence into economic power, and their economic power into political supremacy.

---

1. The Bangkok Post, 19 July, 1955.

CHAPTER SIX

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THAI MILITARY GOVERNMENT

I. Military Autocrat Versus Bureaucratic Pragmatist

The 20th of October, 1958 marked a major event in contemporary Thai politics. It was learned in Bangkok that Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat had quietly returned from his medical treatment in the United States. After having consulted Sarit, General Thanom Kittikhajorn, the Prime Minister, was given an audience by the king to whom Thanom submitted his resignation. In the evening, it was announced over the radio and television that the military group calling itself the Revolutionary Party (Khana Patiwat) had taken control of the country, this time with the consent of the government in power:

> Announcement of the Revolutionary Party
>
> Since 9 p.m. of 20 October, 1958 the Revolutionary Party composed of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Police, and the Civilians has taken control of the government in the name of the Thai people. The general situation is now under the firm control of the Revolutionary Party. The Thai citizens shall continue with their normal business and the officials, their usual duties. All are requested to keep in peace and to cause no disturbance. A movement of troops is prohibited except by the order of the Leader of the Revolution. All military commanders shall listen and follow the orders of the Leader of the Revolution.
>
> In addition, the Armed Forces and the Police are to be informed that there shall be no change in their commanding officers in any way. The present commanders

are to be followed and obeyed.

Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat
Leader of the Revolutionary Party
20th October, 1958.[1]

The fact that the Thanom government had been installed and kept in power by Sarit himself made this coup d'etat seem unusual. Nevertheless, it was soon clear that the action was aimed primarily at some elected members of the Assembly, and the Communists, who were alleged of having exploited the parliamentary processes and the unstable political situation. The Thanom government had not been able to function effectively as political confusion was created by the under-paid politicians more interested in personal enrichment than in national well-being.[2] Communist fronts, left-wing journalists, and some genuine idealists had attempted to pressure the government to follow the path of neutralism and to recognise Communist China. The coup party claimed that "certain selfish groups and individuals have been exploiting the Constitution for their destructive purposes. Constitutional rights and freedom have been used merely to obstruct progress, create disunity and anxiety, and to make men hostile to one another. These men want to see chaos, regression, and the final destruction of the country."[3]

---

1. The Revolutionary Party, Prakat khana patiwat chabab thi nueng (Announcement No. 1), 20 Octoberm 1958, translated by the writer.

2. Many of these politicians previously belonged to the Seri Manangkhasila Party. They were largely "independent" representatives motivated by personal advancement as well as regional interests.

3. The Revolutionary Party, Prakat khana patiwat chabab thi si (Announcement No. 4), 20 October, 1958, translated by the writer.

Consequently, the Constitution was abrogated, political parties banned, the National Assembly dissolved, and the representatives and Cabinet members dismissed. The Revolutionary Headquarters was established with Field Marshal Sarit as Leader of the Revolutionary Party. Sarit was given comprehensive power by virtue of the revolution.

Sarit's unexpected return and assumption of power may also have been motivated by the situation in Laos which, in the eyes of the Thais, had continued to deteriorate rapidly. Internal politics in Laos, it should be noted, had been a major concern of successive Thai leaders for a very long time,[1] and especially so since Laos came under the threat of Communist take-over. In 1954, after the Viet Minh forces had invaded Laos in 1953 and again in 1954, the Phibun government sought to put Laos, Cambodia, and South Viet Nam under the protective umbrella of SEATO.[2] This effort failed due to the British and French reluctance to become involved in the exposed Laos.[3] In 1955, when fighting between the Pathet Lao and government troops broke up in northern Laos, Thailand urged SEATO to intervene. No action was taken.[4] In autumn, 1956, the Thais learned with dismay of Prince Souvanna Phouma's plan to include several Pathet Lao leaders in his government. The Thais are said to be suspicious that Souvanna Phouma "was sympathetic towards the Communists and could be persuaded to make agreement with Pathet Lao

1. For the age-old Thai interest in Laos see Hugh Toye, Laos: Buffer State or Battleground, Oxford University Press, London, 1968, pp. 4-81.
2. Donald E. Nuechterlein, Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1965, p. 140.
3. Ibid., p. 141.
4. Ibid.

that would prove disastrous to both Laos and Thailand."[1] In May 1958, with the non-Communist factions divided, the Communist Pathet Lao captured nine of the twenty-one seats in the supplemental elections thereby increasing its seats in the Laotian Assembly to fifty-nine.[2] With the growing fear of increasing Communist influence in the government of Laos on the part of the Thai leaders, Prince Souvanna Phouma resigned in August 1958 and Laos was plunged once again into another political crisis. This internal instability of Laos caused a great alarm among the Thai leadership who felt that Thailand's security depended largely on a friendly Laos.[3] This self-interest was reinforced by a fraternal feeling toward the Laotian people who are to a great extent culturally identical with the people of the northeastern Thailand.[4] Field Marshal Sarit, himself a northeasterner,[5] was particularly alive to this fraternal feeling between Laos and Thailand. In a speech delivered almost immediately after his take-over of the Thanom government in 1958, Sarit justified Thailand's "special interest" in Laos as follows:

> The relationship between the kingdoms of Thailand and Laos has special characteristics that distinguish it from the simple neighbourliness which would follow from a long common border. For the people are one nation; they have

---

1. Ibid., p. 144.
2. Ibid.
3. L.P. Singh, "Thai Foreign Policy," Asian Survey, Vol. 3, No. 11, November 1963, p. 536.
4. David Wilson, "Bangkok's Dim View to the East," Asian Survey Vol. 1, No. 4, June 1961, p. 13.
5. Colonel Phoumi Nosavan, a right-wing leader of the Laotian government is a relation of Field Marshal Sarit. Toye, p. 121.

> the same language, religion, customs, and physique so that there is nothing to distinguish which is Thai and which is Lao. Moreover, the people who have their homes near the border between the two countries have family ties and relatives who live on both banks of the Mekong, and they must come and go all the time. Because of this special situation, everything that happens in the kingdom of Laos cannot help but affect Thailand.[1]

Hence Sarit's return and his subsequent take-over of the government may have been motivated, at least partly, by his particular concern in the internal stability of Laos whose security, he believed, was inseparable from that of Thailand's. "With Laos in friendly hands," states an observer, "Thailand felt secure against the Chinese Communist menace."[2] But if Laos should fall, Thailand would be in grave danger. This sense of insecurity in face of Communist and Chinese threats, coupled with the reluctance of SEATO to act effectively, may have prompted Sarit to try to impress upon the United States about the magnitude of the crisis by assuming direct absolute power and by cracking down on local left-wing and Communist sympathisers. He may have tried also to convince the United States about the need to render more economic and military assistance to Thailand. It is said that Sarit "informed his followers that Thailand needed a stable anti-Communist government to convince the Americans that it deserved more aid."[3]

---

1. Saphada San, Bangkok, 1 October, 1960, cited in Wilson, pp. 13-14.
2. Donald E. Nuechterlein, "Thailand and SEATO: A Ten-Year Appraisal," Asian Survey, Vol. 4, No. 12, December 1964, p. 1176.
3. Frank C. Darling, Thailand and the United States, Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1965, p. 184.

Unlike previous coups d'etat, following which the Constitution was quickly reinstated and the Assembly re-opened, a new style of Thai politics was introduced. On the 28th of January, 1959 an important document was signed by King Phoumiphon granting Sarit emergency power "to achieve greater improvement in the national administration than would have been feasible under the former Constitution."[1] A brief passage of the so-called Constitution for the Governance of the Realm B.E. 2502 (1959), or the interim-constitution, states as follows:

> During the enforcement of the present Constitution, whenever the Prime Minister deems it appropriate for the purposes of repressing or suppressing actions whether of internal or external origin which jeopardise the national security or the throne or subvert or threaten law and order, the Prime Minister, by the resolution of the Council of Ministers, is empowered to issue orders or take steps accordingly. Such orders or steps shall be considered legal.
>
> All orders issued and steps taken by the Prime Minister in accordance with the provisions of the foregoing paragraph shall be made known to the National Assembly.[2]

Thus, Field Marshal Sarit was given absolute power over the government. Under this arrangement a Constituent Assembly, composed mostly of military officers and civilian officials, was established. Its main task was to draft a new Constitution "more suitable to the Thai situation."[3] It also acted as an interim legislature with the

---

1. Constitution for the Governance of the Realm B.E. 2502 (1959), preamble.
2. Ibid., Article 17.
3. The Revolutionary Party, Prakat khana patiwat chabab thi sibet (Announcement No. 11), 22 October, 1958, translated by the writer.

power to propose, debate, and approve laws and government actions. Under Sarit drastic measures were imposed. The trade union was suspended, opium smoking and trading outlawed, and alleged Communists and arsonists executed.

Undoubtedly, such harsh methods prompted observers to call Sarit a dictator. Others preferred to label the regime a military oligarchy.[1] Although the terms are not incorrect, they nevertheless contribute little to the understanding of a military government. The word oligarchy is often misleading. Democratic government at times exhibits oligarchical features depending upon the institution under scrutiny (especially the labour union and the political party). This is largely due to the mounting specialisation and the increasing government burden which tend to put excessive power into the hands of the few, be they party bosses or cadres, government bureaucrats or experts. The Thai government is thus oligarchical in so far as the distribution of decision-making is confined to the ruling element. Nevertheless, the Thai military possesses other peculiar characteristics worthy of a close study. This chapter is intended to examine some of these characteristics.

Like most Thai leaders, Sarit and the men who came to power with him were educated bureaucrats with long administrative

---

1. John J. Johnson, The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1964, p. 10.

backgrounds.[1] In the Sarit Cabinet of 10 February, 1959, civilian technocrats outnumbered generals. Of 13 ministerial posts, 10 were held by civil officials and only 3 by Army officers. Among the experienced persons were Prince Wan Waithayakorn (Marlborough, Oxford), the Deputy Prime Minister; Professor Sunthorn Hongladarom (Cambridge)[2], the Minister of Economic Affairs; Dr. Thanat Khoman (Paris), the Foreign Minister; M.L. Pin Malakun (Oxford), the Minister of Education; Mr. Bun Charoenchai (Thai Bar Association, Paris), the Minister of Industry; and Professor Phaya Atthakari Niphon (Thai Bar Association), the Minister of Justice.

Sarit's Army associates were also administrators of wide experience. General Thanom Kittikhajorn, the Deputy Prime Minister, was among other things head of the Thai delegation to the United Nations Armistice Commission in Korea in 1953. General Praphat Jarusathian, the Minister of Interior, was a member of the Assembly since 1951. General Phong Punakan, the Minister of Communications, was Deputy Chief of the Transportation Department since 1952. These men were, by and large, conservative due to their bureaucratic orientation. Like most Thai leaders they tended to be pragmatic rather than ideological, and flexible rather than rigid. They were

---

1. It is estimated that of the 237 men who served in the Cabinets between 1932 and 1958, 184 were civil servants. Whereas 70 per cent of Cabinet members during this period were bureaucrats, 95 per cent of the Promoters were government officials, Fred W. Riggs, Thailand: The Modernisation of a Bureaucratic Polity, East-West Centre, Honolulu, 1966, pp. 313-314.

2. Mr. Sunthorn has been appointed Ambassador to the Court of St. James's since 1968.

motivated by the traditional Siamese ideals of benevolence and paternalism which, in Wilson's words, consist of

> a combination of a sense of duty, of noblesse oblige, on the one hand and the end of special legal privileges on the other. When reduced to specifics...(this) ideal is found to mean a fully elected parliament controlling the government, the purposes of which are the people's happiness and prosperity. These ends are an ancient objective of Thai government. They appear in inscriptions of the thirteenth century. The late Chakkri kings adopted them as their objectives and rationale; the constitutional government has taken them over as their own. These objectives are congruent with the Buddhist virtue of benevolence which condition the popular attitude toward government.[1]

Under Sarit's leadership there emerged Thailand's first Six Year National Economic Development Plan (1961-1966). Though the plan was a product of many talents, the chief acknowledgement should go to Sarit. Because of his determination and realism the project was given sustained impetus and practical dimensions. It was the Prime Minister's belief that as an agricultural country Thailand needed to put her efforts towards elevating the agricultural sector of the economy, while attempting to create an infrastructure for industrial development. Sarit thus avoided the grave pitfall of putting priority on industrialisation and prestige projects, a characteristic of similar plans in many developing countries. As Sarit himself put it:

> Thailand will have to depend on revenues from the export of agricultural products as well as primary products for a long time to come. This is unavoidable although unsatisfactory position we have to accept.

---

1. David A. Wilson, Politics in Thailand, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1962, p. 83.

> The dependence on income from agricultural products is not satisfactory because of the fluctuations in prices of these products and bedause we are subject to the vagaries of the far-away markets over which we have no control. To lessen this dependence some measures of industrialisation must be carried out. Industries to be set up will be mostly for processing of local agricultural products and in case of sharp fluctuations, these industries will be able to cushion off the ill-effects of price variations. What is aimed at is to achieve a balanced economy rather than to build up industries for export.[1]

Like most of Siamese civilisation, and innovations, the plan was inspired and adapted from various foreign sources and experiences. By and large it is void of any ideological commitments, modest in purpose and practical in approach (for instance, the plan is divided into two phases enabling the second phase to overcome any difficulties experienced in the first). The main features of the plan illustrate the conservative and realistic nature of the Thai military government:

1. Supplementing the Private Sector: The government intends to make direct investment only in the social-overhead areas such as irrigation, power and energy, communication and transportation, research, public utilities, public health, and education. The Plan represents a public effort to supplement the forces of the private sector.

2. Emphasis on Agriculture: As 80% of the working population are engaged in agriculture, the Plan places great emphasis on the improvement of agricultural activities.

3. Encouraging Private Investment in Manufacturing Industries: The government limits its activities in manufacturing industry mainly to research, survey, and promotion. Both domestic and foreign private investments are encouraged and promoted by various means.

---

1. Marshal Sarit Thanarat, "An Interview Given to the United States Editorial Association Study Mission to Asia, on 6 September, 1961," Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 1, August-September 1961, pp. 57-58.

4. Developing Human Resources: Manpower training and planning are taken to form an integral part of the economic development program. They also serve as links between the economic and education plans.

5. Maintaining Monetary Stability: Excessive spending on the part of the government will be avoided. The main aim is to maintain the value of the baht, and to keep down price increases in a minimum.

6. Promoting Free Competition: Measures are to be taken to check private monopolies as well as to control the quality of goods and services produced.

7. Planning Regional Development: Accepting the fact that regional balanced growth is politically, socially, and economically necessary, the Plan incorporate within itself various regional development programs whose objectives are specially designed in terms of the specific requirements for each of the Regions.[1]

Indeed, the plan was a success. Even after the first three-year phase (1961-1963) production in many areas exceeded the projected target.[2] Thus before his death in 1963 Sarit was able to report the rapid progress achieved under his administration. Within five years of the 1958 coup the gross national product increased by 50 per cent while export rose approximately 55 per cent.[3] National income went up steadily from 41,000 million baht

---

1. Vichitvong N. Pombhejara, "The Second Phase of Thailand's Six-Year Economic Development Plan 1964-1966," Asian Survey, Vol. 5, No. 3, March 1965, pp. 163-164.

2. Ibid., pp. 164-165.

3. Government of Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Prime Minister's Address on the Fifth Anniversary of the Revolution," Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 2, October-November 1963, p. 127.

in 1959 to 46,000 million baht, 50,000 ,illion baht and 53,000 million baht in 1960, 1961, and 1962 respectively.[1] The 1963 figure was estimated to reach a new height of 55,183 million baht.[2] Consequently, the Government was confident enough to announce for the first time the par value of the baht on the fifth anniversary of the Revolution. it was set with the IMF at the rate of 20.84 baht per one U.S. dollar.[3] This was considered "another important step in national economic development for it brings to the attention of Thai nationals as well as people of other countries that Thailand is ready to maintain the present value of the baht in terms of other currencies. The announcement of the par value will have an immense stabilising effect on national economic development for it will dispel doubt and uncertainty arising from the exchange rate fluctuations. This amounts to laying the foundation of our trade and business transactions with other countries besides giving impetus to investments in local industrial enterprises."[4]

Sarit's seemingly dictatorial rule was not without public support. To a great number of Thais whose political interest never went beyond the choosing of village headmen, his government was sensible and progressive. Sarit's identification with the monarchy

---

1. The current rate of exchange is baht 49.059 per one pound sterling (based on January, 1969, Foreign Banknote Selling Rates of Foreign Commerce Bank Inc., Switzerland).
2. Government of Thailand, Address on the Fifth Anniversary, p. 128.
3. Vichitvong, p. 162.
4. Government of Thailand, Address on the Fifth Anniversary, p. 128.

whose prestige remained high, might have contributed significantly to his popularity. Under Sarit, King Phoumiphon and the Royal Family were given a greater role to play, besides the usual ceremonial one.[1] Unlike Phibun and Pridi, Sarit had not been involved in the 1932 Revolution and consequently, had no ill-feeling against the monarchy. Contrariwise, the Prime Minister was aware of the people's affection towards kingship and was quick to utilise the forces of traditions for the sake of national unity. In 1960, the young king was encouraged to make a world goodwill mission, which was considered a remarkable success.[2] Since then he has made many visits to towns, villages, and military units around the country establishing a closer link between the government and the people. Some observers are of the opinion that King Phoumiphon was responsible for the moderation with which Sarit carried out his policies.[3] Sarit's determination and pragmatism were also responsible for the government's popularity:

> Paradoxically, despite his avowed autocratic rule, Sarit was probably the most respected Prime Minister Thailand has had since World War II. He had the distinction of being the only head of government in the constitutional period to remain in office until death, and it was generally agreed in Bangkok that he was more popular with the Thai people during the last

---

1. Donald E. Nuechterlein, "Thailand After Sarit," Asian Survey, Vol. 4, No. 5, May 1964, p. 845.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

> year of his rule than at the beginning. Sarit's success during five years in office may be attributed to a number of factors - his ability to rule effectively without arousing the active opposition of any important element of the population; his strong emphasis on economic development and on a strong Thai currency; his effort to elevate the position of the King, following a twenty-five year period in which the monarchy was in dispute, in providing both external and internal security for Thailand without transforming it into a police state.[1]

When Field Marshal Sarit died of ill-health in September, 1963, General Thanom Kittikhajorn, his close associate and Deputy Prime Minister, was appointed to succeed him. This peaceful assumption of office might be attributed to various reasons. First, Thanom had been Sarit's deputy since October 1958 and had had experience as Prime Minister from January-October 1958. This gave him considerable advantage over the other generals. As former instructor at the Military Academy, Thanom also had a large number of followers who, at one time or another, had been his students. He was widely respected within the Army circle. Secondly, Thanom's close relationship with Sarit gave him considerable power. And it was known that upon his death Sarit chose Thanom as his successor. Although his most serious possible contender, General Praphat Jarusathian,[2] was also an intimate friend of Field Marshal Sarit, Praphat was younger in age and consequently lower than Thanom in seniority. It is said that General Praphat "lost

---

1. Ibid., p. 843.
2. General Praphat became Thanom's Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. He also holds the positions of Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Minister of Interior, and others.

considerable prestige within the ruling elite when Sarit intermittently reprimanded him for his excessive ambitions."[1] Thirdly, Thanom is a man of reconciliation and is well liked by the public[2] whereas his possible rival, Praphat, is said to be "not popular with large segments of the public and many foreign officials."[3] Thanom's popularity among the big powers may have contributed to his political strength. "Thanom," states an observer, "is popular with American and other officials in Thailand and he is noted for his anti-Communist policies. The Americans also favour his heavy emphasis on the economic and social development of the country."[4] Finally, since Thanom has had the active support of the King[5] who appointed him to the rank of Field Marshal upon his taking office, this peaceful succession may be also due to the growing influence of the Throne, which since the departure of Field Marshal Phibun in 1957 has become a vital element in Thai politics:

> The attitude of the King regarding the composition of the government is more important today than at any time since 1933 and should serve as a stabilising factor in Thai politics...It was known in 1957 that the King and Marshal Phibun did not get on well together, and the knowledge contributed to the crisis

---

1. Darling, p. 213.
2. "913", Jormphon thanorm nayok khonsue (Field Marshal Thanom), Odeon Store Press, Bangkok, 1964, p. 35.
3. Darling, p. 213.
4. Ibid., p. 212.
5. Ibid.

> situation which enabled Sarit to stage his first coup d'etat. The influence of the King has grown considerably since that time, and his increased stature make it less likely that a military coup d'etat in future would be successful unless the conspirators knew beforehand that the King would not oppose their action.[1]

Nevertheless, even with the stabilising power of the Throne it would be premature to conclude that the day of the coup d'etat in Thailand is over. Nor can Thanom's assumption of office be truly regarded as a "constitutional" transfer of power.[2] Thanom's success was due largely to his personal strength[3] and the absence of a serious rival, within or without the ruling circle, capable of making a challenge.

Upon taking office Thanom announced that the government would adhere to the main policies of its predecessor. "Since this

---

1. Nuechterlein, Thailand After Sarit, p. 848.

2. Under the Interim Constitution of 1959 there were no provisions indicating a rule of succession upon the death of the Prime Minister.

3. A day before taking office, Thanom was reported to have told the press:

> I have called up all officers in charge of force, including the police. Everyone assured me that he is ready to meet any emergency and to give me every co-operation. Therefore, I believe there will be no disunity.

Thai Press Comment, USIS Bangkok, 9 December, 1963, cited in Nuechterlein, Thailand After Sarit, p. 847.

Government administers the country in accordance with the Constitution for the Governance of the Realm, which is the result of the Revolutionary Régime of 1958 as was the case with the previous Government, and since the administrative policy of the previous Government has evidently yielded substantial benefit to the country and to the people, the Government has, therefore, decided to administer the country in accordance with the said policy as announced in the Assembly on February 12, 1959."[1]

Thanom, benefitted immensely from the work of his predecessor. He also inherited Sarit's Cabinet, and continued with the task of national development. Under Thanom, the economy continued to expand at the annual rate of about 6 per cent with a 3 per cent rise in per capita income. In 1966, the government could look back with satisfaction at its impressive record. The Phoumiphon Dam, providing cheap electricity and irrigation for Central Thailand, was completed. The 400-mile Friendship Highway linking Bangkok with the border province of Nongkhai (opposite the Laotian capital of Vientiane) was opened for traffic. The University of Chiengmai in the North, and the University of Khonkaen in the Northeast, were completed, and another regional university, The Songkhla Nakhalin University,[2] was under way. The Nam Phong Dam which

---

1. Government of Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Prime Minister's Statement of Government Policy, Delivered to the Constituent Assembly on 19 September, 1963," Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 3, December 1963 - January, 1964, p. 240.

2. Named after the king's father who was a graduate of Harvard Medical School and founder of Thai modern medical science.

would provide irrigation and electricity to the long-neglected Northeast, was under construction. Developmental projects in such fields as rural education, health and sanitation, and land reforms were given high priorities.[1] Agricultural products on the whole exceeded expectations, especially rice, maize, tapioca, rubber, and fisheries.[2] At the end of the first Six-Year National Economic Development Plan, Thailand's gross domestic product reached 87,000 million baht representing an annual increase of 7.2 per cent over the period of six years.[3] Agricultural production was diversified with new commodities contributing to the substantial export earnings. At the end of September, 1966 the balance of payments produced a sharp rise in foreign exchange reserves which equalled 820 million U.S. dollars.[4] In January, 1967 the Thanom government, with cautious optimism, launched another similar project called the Second Five-Year National Edonomic and Social Development Plan (1967-1971). According to this programme, the gross domestic product is expected to rise at an average rate of 8.5 per cent a year. Assuming an increase in population of 3.3. per cent a year, average per capita income

---

1. Donald E. Nuechterlein, "Thailand: The Years of Danger and of Hope," Asian Survey, Vol. 6, No. 2, February 1966, p. 120.

2. Vichitvong, p. 164.

3. Government of Thailand, National Economic Development Board, Phaen phatthana setthakit lae sangkhom haeng chat chabab thi sorng phorsor 2510-2514 (The National Economic and Social Development Plan 1967-1971), Office of the Prime Minister, 1968, p. 2.

4. Ibid.

will increase at the rate of over 5 per cent per year and rise to about 3,900 baht by 1971.[1] Both public and private investments will increase substantially[2] during the plan period, stimulating the expansion of many types of economic activity, employment opportunities, and higher income for the people. A significant structural change in the economy is expected during this period, as the agricultural sector declines in significance relative to the non-agricultural sector. By the end of 1971, the share of the agricultural sector in the gross domestic product is expected to be only 26 per cent as compared with approximately 33 per cent in 1965.[3] It is hoped that "the economic outlook is for continued rapid growth in output during the third and fourth plans, as the private sector responds to the physical and social infrastructure and the investment climate built under the plan. Gross Domestic Product is expected to rise by at least 7 per cent per year, doubling present per capita income by 1981."[4]

The achievements and policies of the Sarit and Thanom Governments, despite the setback in parliamentary processes, represent the constructive side of the Thai military - its benevolent outlook and realism. Taking into account the fact that

---

1. Ibid.
2. An important success of the first plan is represented by the fact that the major part of private investments are owned by Thai nationals.
3. Government of Thailand, The Second National Economic and Social Development Plan, p. 2.
4. Ibid., p. 3.

they could not have been attained without the reforms in many areas of national affairs - fiscal and monetary, management and public administration, statistic, law, human relations, education, and planning, etc. - the success will be more appreciated. For example, prior to the launching of the first six-year plan, an overhaul and reorganisation of the government administration had to be undertaken. The new Ministry of National Development, under the able Pote Sarasin,[1] and other agencies had to be created. In consequence, the Office of the Prime Minister, which in the pre-Sarit era consisted of 12 organisations, was enlarged by 16 additional agencies making the total of 28 agencies.[2] This increase was mainly due to new problems and tasks which did not fit into any particular ministry. They were thus incorporated into the Office of the Prime Minister "in order to acquire a firm grasp of Government policies, and to develop an understanding of how to work in the new regime as well as to become familiarised with my thoughts and ideas."[3] As a matter of fact, Sarit planned to create several new ministries to assume the tasks normally handled by the Prime Minister thus alleviating heavy administrative burden on the part of the chief executive.[4] In addition, a new

---

1. Pote, the Anglo-American-trained lawyer, was formerly the Thai Ambassador to Washington and Prime Minister between September and December of 1957.

2. Government of Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Prime Minister's Address on the Third Anniversary of the Revolution," Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 2, October-November 1961, p. 4.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

technique of financing these agencies had to be employed so as not to impose a strain on the government treasury. As Sarit explained:

> I would like to tell you right now that the growth in the number of Government agencies did not entail an equivalent growth in the number of personnel, for the majority of personnel were in the government service already. They were borrowed from other agencies to staff these new organisations. Generally the chief executives of these organisations are ministers or high ranking officials holding salary-carrying positions; they are asked to assume additional duties. It is evident that the creation of these new agencies does not involve any wasteful expenditure, and their work is well conducted.[1]

Tolerance and restraint are among the notable features of the Thai military. This must not be taken to imply, however, that force and violence were never used. On the contrary, all governments in the past have shown the willingness to compel the compliance in pursuing their goals. Nonetheless, the application of extreme measures was to a large extent the exception rather than the rule. The exercise of tolerance and the tendency to compromise were more evident. Perhaps it was because these features were considered compatible with benevolence, the Siamese ideal virtue. Such characteristics were often demonstrated by the Sarit and Thanom governments during the past ten years of their military rules.

Contrary to the popular notion that under Sarit the press was completely controlled and freedom of speech suppressed,[2] the régime

---

1. Ibid., p. 5.
2. For example, in his monumental work on Asia, Gunnar Mydral writes:
   > Sarit declared martial law and dropped all pretence of governing on even quasi-constitutional basis...All political parties were banned, the radio was controlled and the press muzzled. No criticism of the régime was tolerated.

   Gunnar Mydral, Asian Drama: An Enquiry into the Poverty of Nations, Penguin Books, London, 1968, p. 389.

displayed a sense of moderation towards the expression of dissent. Upon its take-over in 1958, the Revolutionary Party announced that:

> We will not impose press censorship. All newspapers can continue their publication without the approval from the Revolutionary Party. We are confident that all members of the press will co-operate with this revolution by giving information truthfully and justly and rendering sincere criticism in a constructive rather than destructive manner.[1]

Though it was never clear what constituted "destructive criticism," most newspapers never suffered censorship. With the exception of few alleged Communist-inspired dailies (mostly in the Chinese language), there was no closure of publishing houses. This may be considered a remarkable display of tolerance in view of the fact that since his ousting of Field Marshal Phibun and Police General Phao in 1957, Sarit had been under constant attack by many newspapers which were in turn largely financed by Phao. News of his personal life,[2] wealth, and business deals were frequently published by the sensation-hungry Bangkok press. And this was done despite Sarit's overwhelming power. Sarit himself expressed his annoyance of press criticism to many colleagues, saying:

> Personally, I cannot tolerate criticism which has no basis in truth. These accusations which degrade me personally and officially are pure lies with the use

---

1. The Revolutionary Party, Prakat khana pativat chabab thi sam (Announcement No. 3), 20 October, 1958, translated by the writer.

2. At the time, it was already being reported that the Field Marshal had several "minor wives" aside from Lady Wichitra, the legal spouse of his second marriage (he has two sons by his first marriage).

> of filthy words. They are things which you and I have to endure at the present. I realise that in politics one must be patient and tolerant. But there is a limit to one's patience and tolerance. I understand fully that the opposition wants to destroy me above all else. They know that should I appear degraded and valueless the whole situation would change. I realise this. But I can hardly stand it. Sometime ago, I confessed that I am a good soldier but admitted conversely that I am a bad politician.[1]

Sarit proved a skilled politician. The liberal attitude towards public opinion may have accounted for his popularity. He is reportedly to have said that "anyone can launch a revolution, but the snag about it is that once a revolution is staged, how to win public approval."[2] Hence, although the charges against the régime and himself may have created tension and irritation on the part of the government, Sarit nonetheless felt it prudent to maintain a smooth channel of communication between the government and the governed. Under Sarit, a centre was established to look into the public opinion. The public was encouraged to send complaints to the centre. This action received a wide response. The Prime Minister appeared to have regarded this action to be compatible with his concept of a good government. As Sarit put it:

> If the principle of "Government is the people's servant" is upheld, the said three years could prove amply that this government is your faithful servant. The past three years have been years of hard work. Despite the fact that the present provisional constitution is still

---

1. Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, Letter to Members of the Chat Sangkhom (National Socialist) Party, February, 1958, (mimeographed), translated by the writer.

2. Mydral, p. 389.

> in force, this government has always lent attentive ears to public opinion and has constantly brought to public attention, without concealment, any task implemented. This government, like all disciples of the Lord Buddha, uphold the principle of Ehipassiko meaning that I challenge you to see and check as to what and how well we have done. It is rare, I believe, for all you brethren to find any other government more faithful to you than this government.[1]

When Thanom succeeded Sarit, a similar spirit and style of government continued. As Wilson observes, "Writing a summary of the year's political trends in Thailand is rather like drawing the Painted Desert with a hard pencil - flat, not very bright but full of intimations,"[2] Such intimations were the continuity of the government despite marked differences in personality and temperament of the new leadership. Whereas Sarit was forceful (at times ruthless), self-confident, and ambitious, Thanom was mild-mannered, compromising and modest. Nevertheless, the interim constitution was maintained, and the martial law technically enforced. Corruption persisted, and the government proceeded, more or less efficiently, as previously. The régime retained its tolerance towards the public despite increasing attacks on the government, particularly about the delay of the constitution and corruption. General Praphat Jarusathian, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of

---

1. Government of Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Prime Minister's Address on the Third Anniversary of the Cabinet," Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 4, February-March, 1962, p.3.

2. David A. Wilson, "Thailand: Scandal and Progress," Asian Survey, Vol. 5, No. 2, February 1965, p. 108.

the Army,[1] was among those who came under heavy public criticism. Various newspapers accused Praphat of his connexions with the private business and monopolies. In 1964, General Praphat was alleged of being responsible for the rising price of pork (the principal meat of the Thais) because the monopoly for pork trading was under his jurisdiction. Under the storm of press attack, Praphat was reported to have said:

> ...that the current outcry against the increased price of pork has been made by three newspapers, namely Prachathipatai, whose approach was rather apposite, but Sarn Seri and Thai Raiwan were writing in manner of having background with motivations to cause trouble... I'd like to observe for another period. If they continue to write like this, certainly it will be no good...
>
> There is background to the pork problem which has been in a messy state all the time. I cannot tell you about this background; suffice to say now that I know about it well.[2]

Despite insinuation and warning of certain unpleasant measures should the press continue to "cause trouble," the Thanom government seldom, if ever, resorted to censorship. Perhaps because of the Prime Minister's personality, outspoken individuals and journalists felt more relaxed under Thanom than under Sarit. The régime continued to pursue a policy of restraint as long as the criticism was not intended to advance the cause of Communism or to expose

---

1. It is noteworthy that as Minister of Interior, General Praphat was also in charge of the Police Department which is an organisation within the Ministry.

2. Bangkok World, 20 September, 1964, cited in Wilson, Scandal and Progress, p. 110.

the nation to apparent danger. Though certain ministers might have liked to exercise control, the majority of the ruling group appeared in favour of leniency and patience.[1]

II. "Thai Democracy"

The main problems affecting the Thai military régime stem from what is popularly called the political public - the educated middle class in Bangkok and other provincial cities. Though this politically articulate group, most of whom are government officials, white-collar workers, university students and teachers, professional men, journalists, and to a lesser extent, urban workers, constitutes a small minority, their influence is by no means minimal. Political changes in the past were largely affected and influenced by their shifts of attitude and allegiance. The victory of the Promoters over the Royalists in 1933 was mainly due to the support of the metropolis population who did not favour the return of the absolute monarchy.[2] In 1947, public discontent triggered off the coup that brought Phibun back to prominence.[3] Similarly, the rise of Sarit

---

1. This quality, called choei (cool-heartedness), is considered by many sociologists and anthropologists as a distinct feature of the Thais: "Siamese regard it (choei) as complimentary and the attitude it expresses as a virtue. It means the ability to take life as it comes without excitement. He who meets the crisis of life with cool mien is "choei"," Kenneth P. Landon, Siam in Transition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1939, p. 148. See also Herbert P. Phillips, Thai Peasant Personality: The Patterning of Interpersonal Behaviour in the Village of Bangchan, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965, pp. 46-47, and John F. Embree, "Thailand: A Loosely Structured Social System", American Anthropologist, LII, 1950, p. 187.

2. See Chapter II.

3. See Chapter III.

in 1957 was a result of public outrage over police repression and Phibun's tampering with the election.[1]

The apparent major issues among the political public may be divided into three categories: national independence and security, public welfare and prosperity, and democracy. Hitherto the success of the military has been the ability to ensure independence and safety, and to an equal extent continued prosperity and well-being. Their vulnerable area, however, has been the maintenance of democracy.

To most Thais, democracy, or Prachathipatai[2] simply means, first and foremost, freedom to pursue one's way of life, profession, education, and religious belief without government intervention and with minimal restriction. Theoretically, these rights and freedoms have been upheld by all Thai constitutions since 1932.[3] In practice, all governments in the past have been most careful not to tamper with them, the exception being the attempt by Pridi and the young Promoters to adopt an extreme socialistic programme, which resulted in the political exile of Pridi. Thai democracy also means the continuation of the nation's sacred symbol, the monarchy, which since the thirteenth century, has been synonymous with the state.

---

1. See Ibid.

2. It means "sovereignty of the people". The term was coined by Prince Wan in the early 1930's.

3. For example, Articles 26, 29, 31, 32, 33, 24 of the 1968 Constitution pledge the guarantee of the individual rights of religion, of person, of dwelling, of property, of speech, and of education respectively.

Following the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in June 1932, "Thai democracy" has become closely identified with democratic institutions namely, the Constitution (Rattha -thammanum), the National Assembly (Rattha-sapha), and the People's Representatives (Phutaen ratsadorn). However naive and msileading the Siamese notion of democracy may have been,[1] most Thais are in favour of what they consider democratic. As Wilson observes:

> Democracy also carry the meaning of freedom. The Thais of all classes resist regimentation, systematisation, and routine. Although the social system requires respect for authority, it also permits room to move. Religion ordains that a man's fate is his own responsibility, and his position is a matter of his personal relationship with other individuals. Any broad legal restraints on individual automomy are resented and evaded. For the love of this kind of freedom, democracy is a useful symbol.[2]

To this accurate observation it may be added that to the Thais, democracy also represents what is good, progressive, and civilised - all civilised and progressive countries of the world are democratic. And since the constitution, parliament, and representatives are indispensable parts of democracy, to be without them implies being undemocratic and thus backward. Proud of their culture, country, and long history of independence, nothing is more abhorrent to the Thais than to appear unprogressive or inferior. Moreover, the

---

1. Mr. Yuang Iamsila, a long-time member of the National Assembly from the province of Udorn, defines democracy as "the ability to know how to respect the rights and freedoms of others and not to limit the rights of others and not to hoodwink others. The purpose of the government is to give most of the people's happiness and bring about understanding among mankind throughout the world...The happiness of the people is satisfaction and not feeling upset"," Wilson, Politics in Thailand, p. 224.

2. Ibid., p. 83.

notions of freedom and democracy have become so deeply infused into the political system since the 1932 Revolution that they have become parts of the public image of a good government. Consequently, the ruling elites have found it necessary to maintain, at least in form, the constitution, the assembly, and the representatives. Even the near absolute régime of Field Marshal Sarit had to create a semblance of thse democratic symbols. Hence, the 1958 interim-constitution, the Constituent Assembly, and the all-appointed Constituent members (acting as legislators) were earnestly invented.

To maintain a democratic posture while keeping themselves firmly in power, all previous military governments were compelled to exploit the system of constitutionalism; the most convenient means being to write into the constitution the allocation of parliamentary seats for their own appointed members. The Promoters did so by dividing the National Assembly into two categories: the first elected by the people in a popular franchise, and the second chosen by themselves under the disguise of the Royal appointment. Article 63 of the 1932 Constitution, which was in effect between 1932-1946 (in the original version) and between 1952-1957 (in the revised version), states as follows:

> Until such time that half of the eligible voters have not yet acquired the primary education, and within the period of not less than ten years from the date of the enforcement of this Constitution, the Assembly of the People's Representatives shall be composed of two categories of membership equal in number.
>
> 1. Members of the first category elected by the people in accordance with the provisions of Sections 16 and 17.
>
> 2. Members of the second category appointed by the King

> according to the electoral law as prescribed by the transitory provisions of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam B.E. 2475.[1]

Similar constitutional manipulations enabled the officers to dominate the government since 1932.[2] Nevertheless, throughout the years certain concessions had to be made to the elected representatives either to make them refrain from making criticisms, delaying government actions, or to elicit their support. This tactic, under the disguise of constitutionalism, worked well until October 1958 when it was considered a hindrance by the revolutionary government of Field Marshal Sarit.

Prior to Sarit's coup d'etat, most Thais thought of their country as a democracy. This impression was caused by the tolerant nature of the government, economic well-being, effective government propaganda, and the presence of democratic institutions - namely, the constitution,[3]

---

1. Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam B.E. 2475 (1932), Article 63, translated by the writer.

2. Between 1 August, 1944 and 5 April, 1948 the country was under the civilian governments of Khuang Aphaiwong (1 August, 1944 - 16 August, 1945), Seni Pramoj (17 September, 1945 - 6 January, 1946), Khuang Aphaiwong (31 January, 1946 - 25 March, 1946), Pridi Phanomyong (24 March, 1946 - 23 August, 1946), Thamrong Nawasawat (24 August, 1946 - 8 November, 1947), and Khuang Aphaiwong (11 November, 1947 - 5 April, 1948), chronologically.

3. Since June 1932 there have been eight constitutions: the Provisional Constitution (27 June, 1932) the Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam B.E. 2475 (10 December, 1932), the Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam B.E. 2489 (9 May, 1946), the Provisional Constitution (9 November, 1947), the Constitution of the Kingdom of Siam B.E. 2491 (23 March, 1949), the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2475, as revised 2495 (26 February, 1952), the Interim Constitution of B.E. 2502 (29 January, 1959), and the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2511 (20 June, 1968).

the parliament, and the representatives. All Thai politicians paid lip-service to democracy knowing it to be revered by the people. The public, largely innocent of the true meaning of democracy and free to pursue their normal un-political activities, was convinced.[1]

When Field Marshal Sarit came to power the situation was somewhat different though not entirely unique. Because of Sarit's forcefulness and frankness, and because of an increasing external threat, the political public seemed to agree that a transitional period was necessary, "for the external and internal situations have been grave, Communist menace has become serious, and the only way to deal with the cirsis is through a revolution".[2] Sarit himself promised that "when the emergency period is over the country will be back to a true democracy. I and the military party...will wash our hands from politics."[3]

---

1. Even after the Sarit take-over this illusion persisted. A survey conducted by the writer in 1964 among university applicants of the Department of Mass Communications and Public Relations, Chulalongkorn University, revealed that most of the students believed Thailand was a democracy. Of 480 students asked whether their country was a democracy, 92 per cent said it was, 6 per cent said it was not, and 2 per cent were not certain.

2. The Revolutionary Party, Prakat khana patiwat chabab thi sorng (Announcement No. 2), 20 October, 1958.

3. Sarit, op. cit.

Unlike most Thai politicians, Sarit seldom used the word democracy.[1] Yet it was believed that he was attempting to lay a firm foundation for it. Aside from Sarit's effort at economic development, many programmes designed to broaden the political participation were initiated. Travelling teams were dispatched to the rural areas enquiring into the people's problems and needs. Tools, supplies for construction works, and medical treatment were given to the villagers. The government displayed more interest in the welfare of the rural folks. Meetings were arranged enabling the village headmen and commune leaders to discuss their problems. Through these forums it was hoped that a sense of responsibility and political consciousness of the low-level community leaders would be expanded.[2] Under Sarit, rural development projects were given particular interest. The new Department of Community Development was formed. Attempts were made to match the progress in the standard of living with the expansion in the government service. To improve communications, the government signed an agreement with the United States for the construction of a national communication network, two-fifths of which was completed in 1963. A plan to enlarge the public transportation system was launched. It was hoped that within the period of eight years, 5,400 kilometres of all-weather roads

---

1. It was substituted with "constitutionalism", a term implying an adherence to certain forms of constitution without necessarily being democratic.

2. David A. Wilson, "Thailand: Old Leaders and New Directions," Asian Survey, Vol. 3, No. 2, February 1963, p. 84.

would be achieved.[1]

Perhaps the most far-reaching investment in political development undertaken by Sarit was in the field of education. Among the ambitious schemes announced by the Revolutionary Government was the extension of compulsory education from five to seven years. New schools were built, existing facilities expanded, and student enrollment, especially at the elementary level, sharply increased. Within three years after Sarit's take-over, more than 900 elementary schools were constructed.[2] The five old universities in Bangkok were enlarged while three regional universities in the North, the Northeast, and the South were built. "If we combine the appropriations of the Ministry of Education together with those of all the Universities which are under the Office of the Prime Minister, we shall arrive at an amount of appropriations larger than any given to other ministries."[3]

Since Sarit never used the term democracy liberally, to speculate about his views on future Thai political system poses some difficulty. He was, nevertheless, known to have favoured a de Gaulle type of democracy[4] - a strong executive with the Prime Minister responsible directly to the people rather than to the

---

1. Ibid., pp. 84-85.
2. Government of Thailand, Prime Minister's Address on the Third Anniversary of the Revolution, p. 9.
3. Ibid.
4. Wilson, Scandal and Progress, p. 111.

Assembly. This preference was largely due to his contempt for the elected representatives whom he considered selfish and irresponsible. It was also known that Sarit was in search of a system of government based on Thai culture and suitability. Mr. Thanat Khoman, one of the régime's most articulate spokesmen, provides an elaboration on this idea:

> ...It is my feeling that this nation must have confidence in the inherent strength of our national structure and way of life. More than ever, this is now the time for us to look into ourselves and decide whether we can work out our own salvation on the basis of our past experience and national heritage. In recent time, we seemed to have doubt about the value of such heritage. We tried to borrow from other nations institutions especially political institutions like parliamentary system which we thought might work satisfactorily here. It is a well-known fact that the result of the experience has been disappointing, the lack of the success may be attributed to the inadequacy of the preparations for such a system to succeed. But certainly it was not because this country is not ripe for democracy, as contended by some Western observers. As evidenced by what has been said before the Thai people do not lack in democratic dispositions. We have faith in the moral and practical democracy and the life of our people has been shaped and inspired by it for a long time. Therefore, we need not seek elsewhere inspiration which is already blossoming in our midst. The solution to our political structure which seems to arouse wide interest among Western observers can certainly be devised within our national framework by bringing in appropriate adjustments so that it will suit our historic traditions and national characteristics. We may also profit by the failure of such system in many places even in the Western world and also elsewhere so as to make sure that when it is revived here it will have a chance to grow and prosper. In the mean time, proper foundations and groundwork are being laid in order to avoid the pitfalls which had revealed themselves here and in other places. At the same time, I believe we can offer to the world the experience of our moral and practical democracy which has given our people and those who live in our society the enjoyment

of their basic rights, freedom and privileges.[1]

Sarit did not live to see the fruit of his ideal. His successor, nevertheless, inherited not only his Cabinet and enthusiasm, but also Sarit's quest for a Thai-style democracy. Upon taking office, Field Marshal Thanom pledged that his government "will administer the country by abiding by the principle of democracy and will respect human rights. Anything that will bring happiness to the people will have their entire support."[2] The new Administration thus pressed on with the task of national development. It attempted to consolidate the internal security. The Constituent Assembly proceeded with the drafting of the new Constitution. However, the leisurely manner in which the constitution was being prepared increasingly irritated the political public. It was all too clear that the military was in no mood to rush back to a parliamentary system. Though many people were inclined to accept this as the price of rapid economic and social progress, others became discontented. Unemployed politicans and journalists were among the most vocal against what they called the political monopoly by the officers. Educated Thais were embarrassed by the term dictatorship attributed to their country. The long period of political inactivity, and the increasing knowledge of the outside world, all contributed to the mounting public outcry for a "return to democracy". "Our system

---

1. Thanat Khoman, "The Policy of Self-Reliance and Mutual Co-operation", Address Delivered at the American Association of Thailand, 8 March, 1961, Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 3, December 1961 - January 1962, pp. 9-10.

2. Government of Thailand, Prime Minister's Statement of Government Policy, p. 241.

of government," lamented a Thai writer, "is the government of the officials, by the officials and for the officials."[1]

Ceaseless public pressure compelled the Thanom government to head once again towards "democracy". On 20 June, 1968 the long-awaited Constitution was finally proclaimed. It was soon followed by the first Bangkok-Thonburi municipal election in ten years. Political parties were formed and about a dozen political parties came into being. The main contestants, however, were expected to be between the old Democratic and the régime's Saha pracha thai (United Thai People) Parties. The general election was set on 10 February, 1969 and political activities returned to life.

Despite this democratic appearances several observers already foresaw no substantial change on the Thai political scene. "The euphoria which the election is generating is largely illusory," stated the Times, "as it is recognised by everyone that the present Council of Ministers will remain in power after the elections."[2]

A careful reading of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2511 (1968) and a knowledge of Thai political history will substantiate this prediction. Although the present Constitution differs in many respects from previous documents,[3] the underlying

---

1. The Social Science Review, Vol. 5, no. 4, March 1968, p. 156.
2. The Times, 21 January, 1969.
3. For instance, an attempt is made for the first time to separate the Executive from the Legislature similar to the United States presidential system. Article 139 of the Constitution prohibits the Prime Minister and other Ministers from being members of the Senate or the House of Representatives.

philosophy remains the same. This is the intention to create an appearance of democracy while enabling those who are powerful (i.e. the Army) to govern. At the outset there is the familiar provision dividing the legislature into two houses: the Senate (Wuthi sapha) and the House of Representatives (Sapha phutaen).[1] Whereas the House of Representatives is composed of members elected by the people on the basis of 150,000 population per one representative,[2] the Senate is comprised of members appointed by the king.[3] The numbers of these "senators" are equal to three-fourths of the total membership of the House of Representatives[4] (estimated to be 219 in the 1969 elections). Their terms last six years and they possess powers essentially equal to those of the elected representatives. Members of the Senate, for example, may sign a motion to open a general debate in order to vote no-confidence on the Ministers individually or collectively.[5] They can approve and veto the bills proposed by the government or the House of Representatives,[6] amend the constitution,[7] approve the appointment of Regent,[8] and vote confidence or no-confidence on the government members individually or collectively.[9] In short,

---

1. Article 71.
2. Articles 82 and 83.
3. Article 78.
4. Ibid.
5. Article 128.
6. Articles 119 and 120.
7. Article 134 (II).
8. Article 134 (I).
9. Article 128.

the appointed Senators will sit jointly, and with equal authority, with the elected Representatives on all vital occasions. Taking into account the fact that these powerful members of the Senate "who are persons qualified in technical or in various other affairs which will benefit the national administration" and who are supposedly "appointed by the Royal Command,"[1] are actually officers of the services and civil bureaucrats who are chosen by the ruling party,[2] the military already possess an overwhelming edge over their opposition.[3] As Seni Pramoj put it, "The constitution of 1968 almost achieves immortality for the Thai government."[4]

Under this arrangement the Thanom government needed only slightly more than one-fourth of the total number of representatives to command a majority in the National Assembly. About 56 representatives were estimated to be sufficient. More important, the lack of a majority could not prevent the military from forming a constitutional government. For the constitution requires the Chairman of the National Assembly (who is one of Thanom's appointees)

---

1. Article 78.

2. Of the 120 Senators, 61 are Army officers, 13 Naval officers, 7 Air Force officers, 11 police officers, and 13 civilian officials. Only 5 can be identified as non-officials.

3. M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, Seni's younger brother, is perhaps the only Senator whose allegiance to the régime is somewhat doubtful. The selection of Kukrit is said to have stemmed from his enormous popularity as a journalist and writer, his past co-operation with Sarit, and his being the king's candidate. Kukrit is also owner of the respectable and influential newspaper, Siam Rat.

4. Time Magazine, 21 February, 1969.

to recommend the Prime Minister for the royal appointment; and there is no provision demanding him to call upon the leader of the majority party. In any event, the military was likely to obtain support from various minor political parties, some of which were controlled by military figures of lesser stature. Other political parties offered the regime their backing.[1] Many freelance politicians, out of a desire for personal gain, were likely to join the government party whose control of wealth and influence was apparent.

With the coming of the elections, dissent emerged. The government was blamed for almost everything from the rising price of pork, Communist insurgency, and bureaucratic corruption to failure in providing adequate university education.[2] Military interference in politics also came under criticism. "Soldiers on active duty," declared an opposition candidate, "should not be involved in politics."[3] At their first political rally in Bangkok, the government candidates were met with constant heckling.[4] Public hostility was so strong that the candidates could not wage their campaign in full earnest.[5] On the other hand, the government's main opposition, the Democrats., were

---

1. Siam Rat, 29 November, 1968.
2. The Bangkok Post, 7 January, 1969.
3. Ibid.
4. The Bangkok Post, 27 January, 1969.
5. Most newspapers blamed this on the lack of political experience of the government candidates, most of whom were bureaucrats. However, the Director General of the Saha prachathai Party, Air Marshal Thawi Julasab, accused "some trouble makers" in the audience for fomenting the incident.

received with enthusiasm.[1] After the counting of the ballots, it was announced that the Thanom party lost all of the 15 Bangkok seats to its rival, the Democrats.[2] However, the government party did well outside the capital. Consequently, out of the total of 219 contested seats, 75 were won by the régime's United Thai People's Party, 57 by the Democrats Party, 72 by independent candidates, 7 by the Constitutional Front Party, 4 by the Socialist Front Party, 2 by the People's Party and 1 each by the Farmers' Party and the Free Democracy Party.[2] After the election, 35 of the 72 independents announced that they were joining the governmental party "to ensure stability of Parliament and allow a democratic process to function,"[3] The government thus attained an absolute majority in the House of Representatives.

Hence, through a constitutional manipulation and by exploiting Thai political weaknesses the Field Marshal Thanom government, like its predecessors since 1932, will continue to rule without serious opposition and with the appearance of being democratic. This "Thai democracy" is, no doubt, motivated by the self-interest of the military. Nevertheless, it is the result of constant preoccupation

---

1. A large number of listeners donated to the Democrats'war chest to help in the campaign. The Bangkok Post, 7 January, 1969.

2. The Bangkok Post, 13 February, 1969.

3. The Bangkok Post, 21 February, 1969.

with national security, the chief purpose being to provide an image of a "modern" nation while maintaining maximum stability. Whereas the government will listen to public opinion and permit the opposition to probe, at time, sensitive questions, it is not willing to be interrupted by dissent. Such is regarded as vitally important for national survival in face of the internal and external threats. The all-prevailing rationale and spirit underlying this "new" arrangement may be reflected by Field Marshal Sarit's speech on the fifth anniversary of the Revolutionary Government. As he put it:

> Fellow Thai nationals...I wish to reiterate that the most ardent wish of this government is to achieve for the country maximum stability and advancement. Fellow Thai nationals will surely recall that before we settled down in the Golden Peninsula, the land of our forefathers had been subjected to innumerable incursions and raids. Whenever the Thai people weakened they were invaded and sometimes even reduced to complete disintegration. Our forebears gave us a lesson of the utmost significance for which they themselves had paid with their blood and tears must serve as a constant warning to us all. We must always stand united and act in concert to preserve the national independence and sovereignty. Further we must go full steam ahead with our work with national development. Please do not forget that only a developed nation can provide its people with welfare and happiness and that a country which lags behind in economic advancement is easily exposed to the danger of Communism. I, therefore, implore all Thai patriots to give maximum co-operation to the government in developing the country by applying yourselves earnestly and with all your might to whatever trade and occupation you are engaged in. Let us vie with one another in doing good to leave footprints in the sand of time and to set examples to the generations to come. As for myself, I beg to make a solemn pledge that I will never desert the motherland or fellow Thai nationals. As long as I live, you may rest assured that I am ready to throw in my lot with you, come what may.[1]

1. Government of Thailand, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Prime Minister's Address on the Fifth Anniversary of the Revolution", (Delivered over radio and television on 20 October, 1963), Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 2, October-November 1963, pp. 134-135.

CONCLUSION

The military has been the major force in the domestic politics of Thailand for a very long time, at least for thirty-seven years since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932. Throughout these years it has wielded enormous power and influence. It has been in the forefront of the political arena for most of the period. Yet the Thai military is by no means a monolithic power structure. Nor is it an independent political force in itself. It is merely an element, indeed the most important element, of the ancient, solidly entrenched, and all-important power structure - the bureaucracy. "The Thai government," states a Thai political scientist, "is simply the government of bureaucrats."[1] This is bureaucratic government tinted with military flavour.

This state of affairs is the consequence of a long, largely uninterrupted history of Thailand. Under the absolute monarchy bureaucratic authority was checked, more or less effectively, by the supreme power of the king whose authority was sanctioned by religious teachings and Brahmanistic divine right concept.[2] The

---

1. Siam Nikorn, 21 August, 1968.

2. However, unlike the European concept of divine right, the Siamese king was regarded merely as a "supposedly God King" (sommutta thewarat). Perhaps this was due to the influence of Buddhism, a religion without dieties.

monarchy provided adequate leadership and guidance for court officials, civil and military. Under the two great kings of the Chakkri dynasty, Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, however, the modernisation process seriously undermined the position of the throne itself. After the collapse of the absolute monarchy in 1932, a void was left in the national leadership. No existing institution was strong enough to check the bureaucrats; the monkhood was apolitical, the intellectuals, most of whom were the officials themselves, were conservative, and the interest or pressure groups almost non-existent.[1] With the loss of monarchical control, and without parliamentary or mass party authority to substitute for it, bureaucratic power thus became omnipotent.

The power vacuum left by the monarchy has in turn been filled by the aggressive element of the bureaucracy - the armed forces. The military, especially the Army, has taken over the national leadership. Army officers have managed to play a peculiar dual role within and without the established bureaucracy. Within the total system, a general was only a member of the official class, and he had to conform to the civil service rules and regulations. Outside it, he took on the role of a politician with as great enthusiasm and appetite for power as politicians everywhere. His bureaucratic organisation and his cliques of friends, associates and clients became his constituencies. Military bureaucracy, moreover, provided the generals with superior political organisation in which to compete

---

1. Wirot Phujinda, "Pressure Groups and Interest Groups," Siam Nikorn, 9 August, 1968, p. 4.

with other political groups or other bureaucratic agencies. It gave the military considerable advantage over other groups. In short, military bureaucracy became a kind of political party for the officers:

> Indeed it has often been difficult to distinguish between political parties and armies. Parties, especially extremist parties, have tended to organise as military forces, with weapons, uniforms, military discipline, social isolation, elaborate organisation, and violent tactics. Armies, on the other hand, have tended to take on the roles and trappings of political parties: competing for control of government, making nominations, electing candidates, organising para-civilian auxiliaries, adopting and furthering programmes of reform. What is an army? A kind of political party. What is a party? A kind of army.[1]

However, unlike the monarchy, the military lacked legitimacy for its authority.[2] Its rule was generally, although unrealistically, regarded as "temporary". It often faced stiff opposition within and without the bureaucracy. At times it was weakened by inter-factional rivalry inside its own organisation. It felt obliged to rely on the technocrats to assist in the state's administration and to provide an image of respectability in the eyes of the foreign powers. Without legitimate monetary resources to maintain its political machinery, it resorted to devious practices including financial co-option with some civilian officials and the Chinese entrepreneurs. At times

---

1. Robert C. Fried, Comparative Political Institutions, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1965, p. 82.

2. Nevertheless, in this respect the Thai military is perhaps more fortunate than its counterparts in many countries. The monarchy, the survivor of several crises, has proved to be a useful legitimiser for the non-elected government.

these irregularities have exposed the military to severe public criticism and have on occasion resulted in the removal of powerful members.[1] These practices have also led to constant frictions within the ruling group and have been one of the main causes of the government's instability. Yet the system has been so well extrenched that it is viewed as a political expediency:

> But what is called patronage in the West is labelled as corruption in Thailand, perhaps it is so blatant. Premier Phibun and Sarit, as well as the current Minister of the Interior, made personal fortunes while in office, although a large portion of Sarit's holdings were seized by the government after his death... The custom seems to be essential to provide enough emoluments for high officials to meet the expenses of their office, for their salaries are very low; yet the custom is so institutionalised that the opposition, be it liberal or communist, is inclined to view the entire government establishment as corrupt.[2]

Nevertheless, the Thai military has sought to come to terms with the critical public. In a short term, this has shown itself in subsequent government attempts at establishing a quasi-parliamentary system and in presenting a pseudo-democratic façade. The quasi-parliamentary set-up is essential in making the military rule legitimate. It provides a legal basis upon which the day-to-day administration is run with the co-operation of the high ranking bureaucrats. It gives a certain degree of flexibility to highly

---

1. In 1949, for instance, Colonel Kaj Kajsongkhram, a leader of the Coup d'Etat Group (Khana Rathaprahan) of 1947, was expelled from the ruling circle on charges of foreign currency smuggling. In 1965, General Surajit Jaruserani, the Minister of Agriculture, in the Thanom Cabinet, was imprisoned on charges of corruption (he died in custody in 1968).

2. John H. Badgley, "Two Styles of Military Rule: Thailand and Burma," Government and Opposition, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1969, p. 103.

centralised rule. It allows dissent to express itself within the framework of the system. The maintenance of a democratic image is necessary in making the system of rule seem more liberal, more agreeable. The following report on a recent statement of a leading member of the Thanom government is representative of such attempts at coming to terms with the political public:

> Last week General Krit Punnakan, the Director General of Public Relations Department, gave a speech to government officials on the occasion of the Department's anniversary. His speech was received with delight and satisfaction by the public. The Director General warned the officials present that their bosses did not consist only of their superiors. Their real bosses, he said, were the people - those tax payers who gave their money for the officials' salaries. Therefore, in their day-to-day work, it was necessary for the bureaucrats to listen to their real bosses. The officials had to understand the people's desires and try to fulfill these desires accordingly. This speech by the Director General gave the public much pleasure...[1]

In a long term, the military has tried to demonstrate to the political public its ability to rule effectively, efficiently and with minimum political tension. In this respect the generals have been particularly successful. The economic achievement under Field Marshals Phibun,[2] Sarit, and Thanom in the past decade was by all standards impressive and it has become a strong argument in favour of military rule. It was largely responsible for their success in the 1969 elections. It has been pointed out all too often that in Thailand what cannot be achieved under a democracy can be achieved

---

1. Prachathipatai, 12 May, 1969, translated by the writer.
2. Professor Silcock argues that the economic breakthrough under Sarit (and sustained by Thanom) is actually the result of a number of programmes initiated earlier by Phibun. T.H. Silcock, ed., Thailand: Social and Economic Studies in Development, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1967, p.22.

under a "strong" authority:

> If we look at our national history, we can very well see that this country works better and prospers under an authority, not a tyrannical authority, but a unifying authority around which all elements of the nation can rally. On the contrary, the dark pages of our history show that whenever such an authority is lacking and dispersal elements had their play, the nation was plunged into one disaster after another. We are confident at the same time because of the store of democratic faith in our traditions that such authority will not trespass its proper limits, and if it does, it will do so at its risk and peril. This nation with its long history of freedom has never tolerated for long that its inherent right and freedom are trampled upon, either from within or without. The popular reactions, had in the past, been rather swift and there is no indication that the Thai nation has ever changed in this respect.[1]

With its well entrenched power, its bureaucratic organisation, its elaborate network of cliques and clients, and its somewhat sophisticated and flexible tactics in coming to terms with the public, it is likely that the Thai military will continue to be a decisive factor in politics for a very long time. Any attempt in the direction of a more genuine democratic arrangement is less than likely to be accomplished without its co-operation and consent. Even if this happens, the search for a workable democracy in Thailand is likely to follow a long and rugged road, with the armed forces contributing enormously to its success or failure. As a Thai rightly says, "it would demand many sacrifices and many compromises by the liberals, by the intellectuals, by the military, and by all other pressure groups

---

1. Thanat Khoman, "A New Era for Thailand," An Address to the American Association of Thailand, Bangkok Post, 10 March, 1959.

of Thailand before it could be made to work."[1] And even when genuine democracy has already been achieved, the Thai military will probably continue to exercise enormous influence, directly or indirectly, over the government. "Even when the armed forces do withdraw from the stage," states Johnson, "everyone will be aware that the undercover threat of violence remains a key component of military influence. This negative aspect is bound to give the armed forces considerable weight in decision-making."[2] This conclusion, drawn in respect of the military in Latin America , is equally applicable to Thailand.

---

1. Paul Sithi-Amnuai, Thailand - Will Democracy Work?, Wall Street, New York, 1967, p. 23.

2. John J. Johnson, The Military and Society in Latin America, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1964, pp. 251-252.

Appendix 1

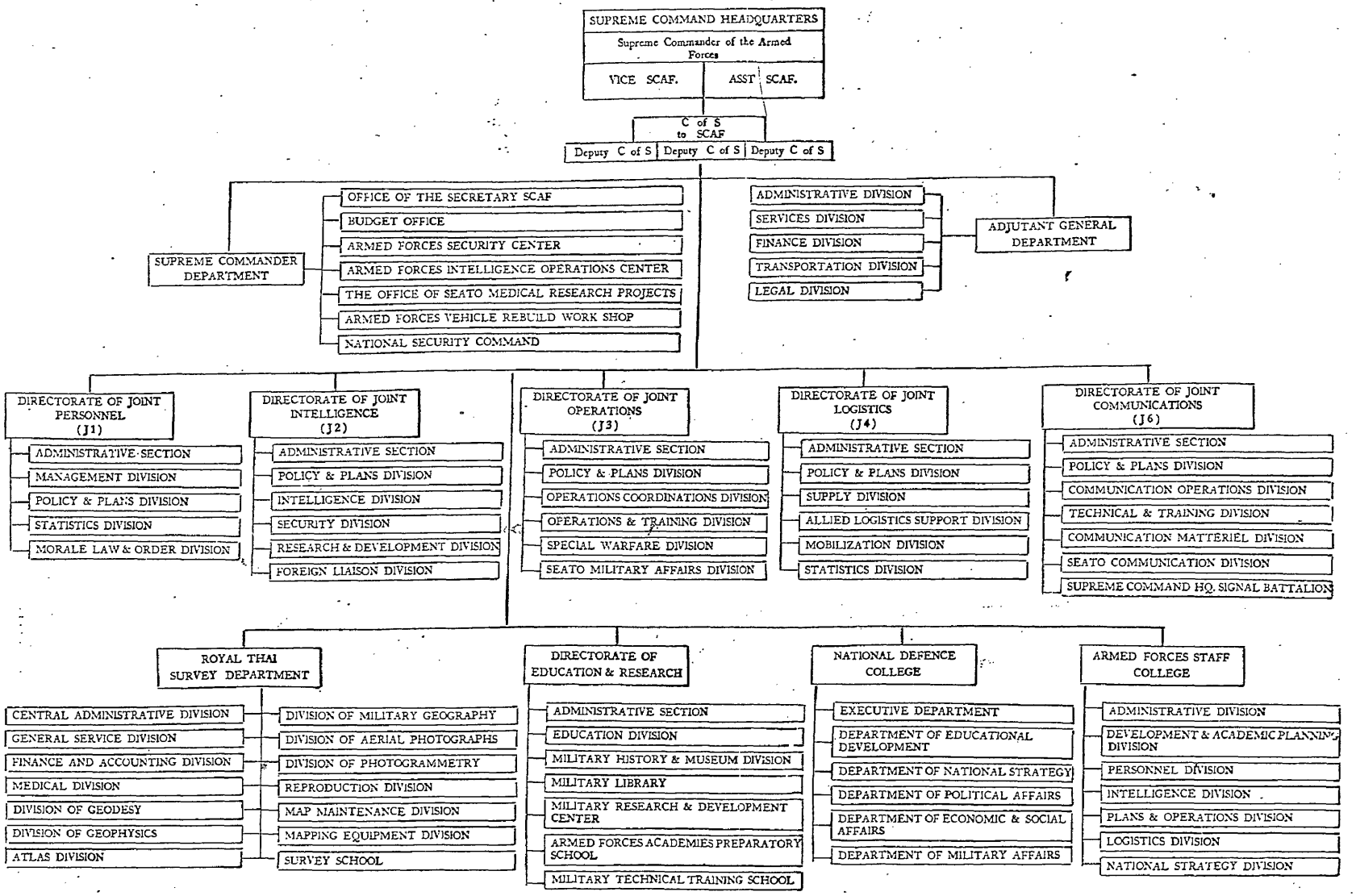
The Military and Civilian Ranks During the Reign of King Chulalongkorn

Class	Sakdina Grade	Civilian Rank	Military Rank
1	10,000	Maha ammat ek	General
2	5,000	Maha ammat tho	Lt. General
3	3,000	Maha ammat tri	Maj. General
4	2,000	Ammat ek	Colonel
5	1,000	Ammat tho	Lt. Colonel
6	800	Ammat tri	Major
7	600	Rorng ammat ek	Captain
8	400	Rorng ammat tho	Lieutenant
9	200	Rorng ammat tri	Sub-Lieutenant
		Other non-commissioned ranks	

Source: Adapted from Damrong Rachanuphap, Prachum phongsawadan phak thi sam tamnan kankenthahan (Collection of Chronicles Part 23: History of Military Conscription), Thaphrajan Press, Bangkok, 1966.

Appendix 2

THE ORGANIZATION CHART OF SUPREME COMMAND HEADQUARTERS

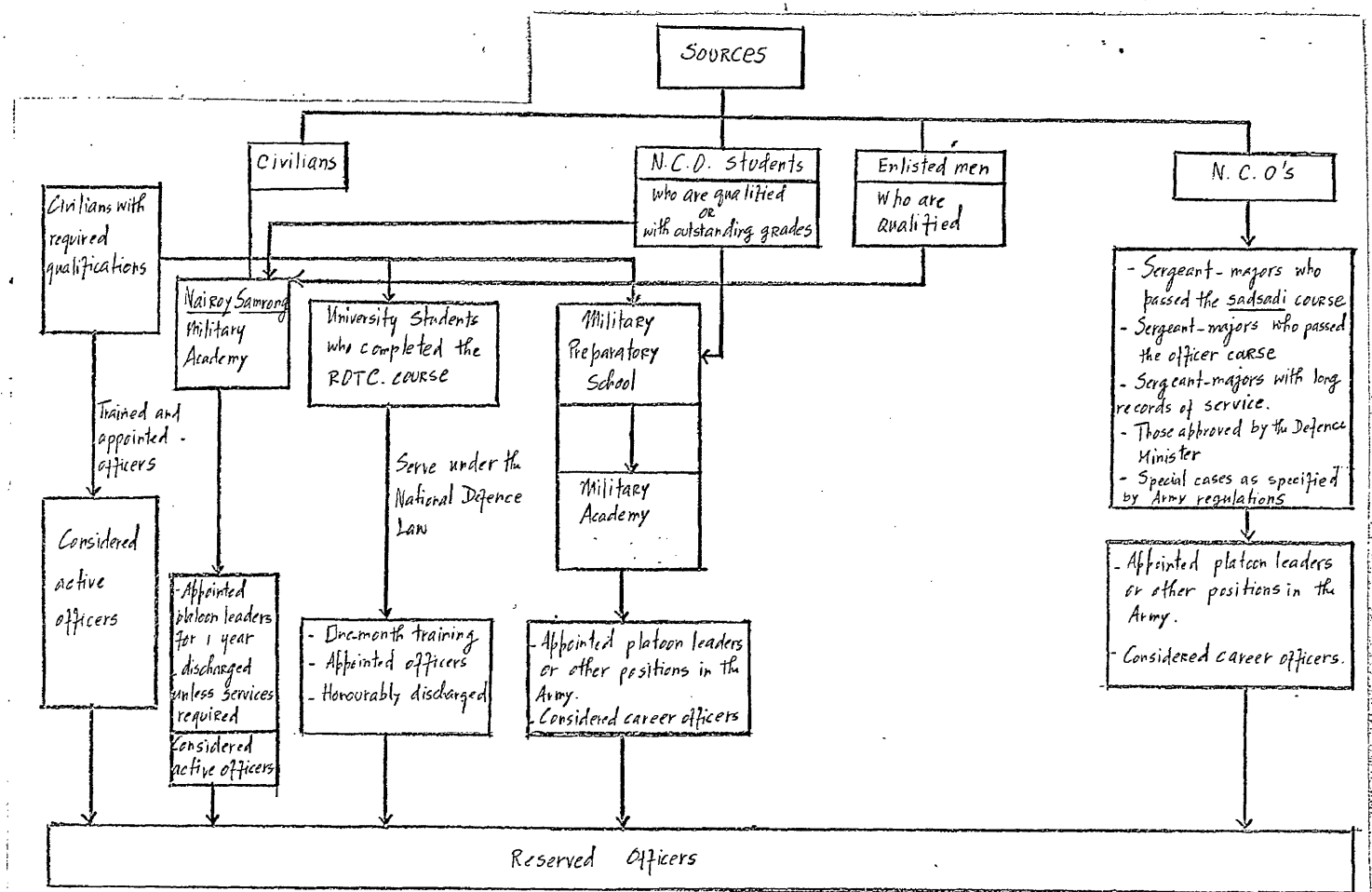


Source: Government of Thailand, Ministry of Defence, The Supreme Command Headquarters, Bangkok, 1967.

Appendix 3

The Plan of the Procurement of Officers

The Royal Thai Army



Source: Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Kansueksa sammana kamlangphon chan sung (Seminar on High-level Manpower), Bangkok, 1963, p. 48, translated by the writer.

Appendix 4

The Educational Plan for Army Officers

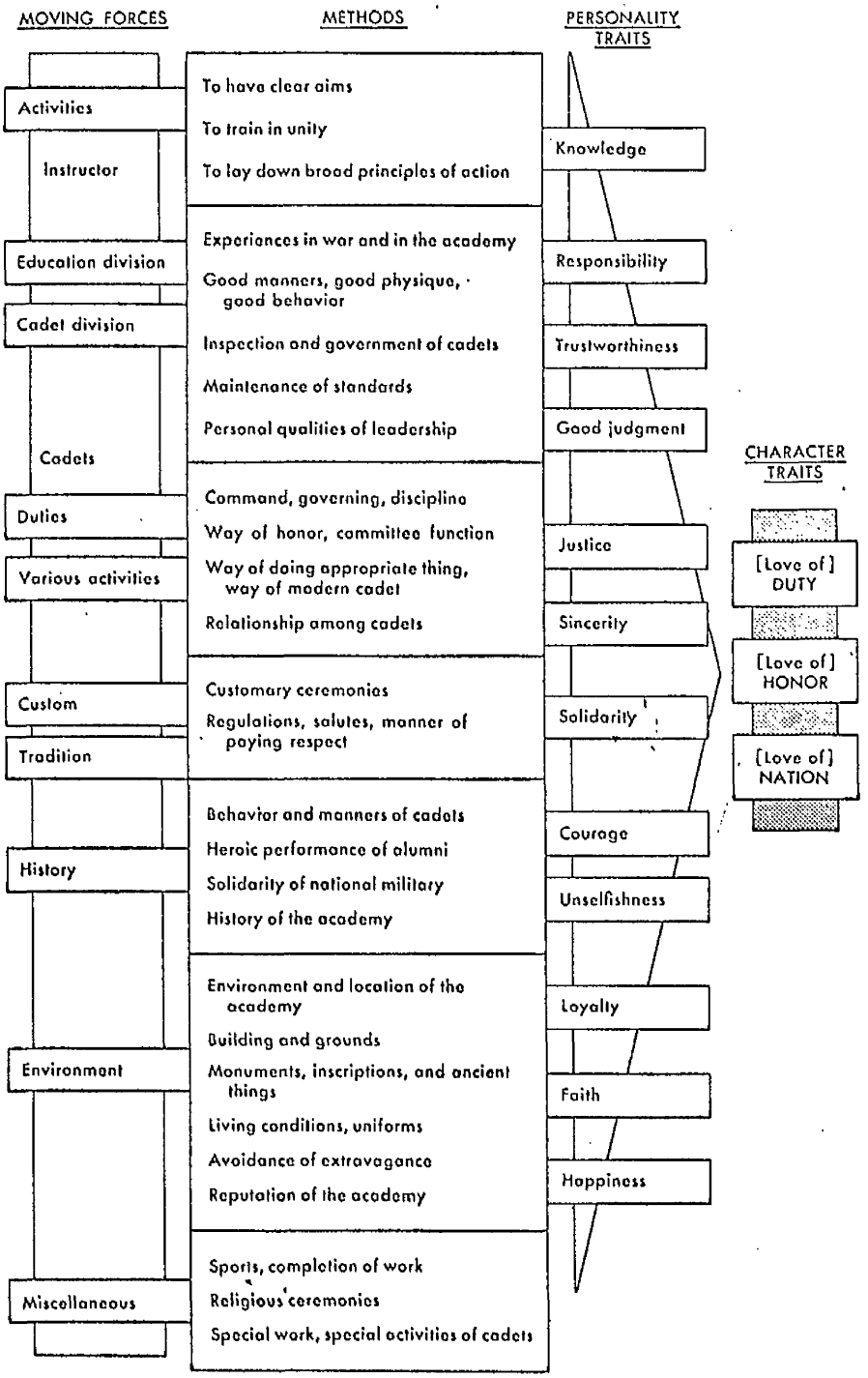
Salary Grade	
1	Train as platoon leader and enroll in Guerilla Warfare Course, Paratrooper Course or Special Warfare Course
2	
	Work in unit according to specialised training
3	
4	Enroll in Company Commander Course
5	
6	
7	
A----8	Enroll in Battalion Commander Course
9	
10	Study in Command and General Staff College (Selective only)
B----11	
12	
13	Study in Armed Forces Staff College (Selective only)
14	
15	
16	Study in Army War College (Selective only)
25	Study in institutions outside the Army (voluntarily or by recommendation)

A - Students entering Company Commander Course, salary grade must not exceed this point.
B - Students entering Battalion Commander Course, salary grade must not exceed this point

Source: Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Phaen kansueksa baeb mai (Notes on New Educational System), Bangkok, 1965, translated by the writer.

Appendix 5

The Inculcation of Character in the Army Academy

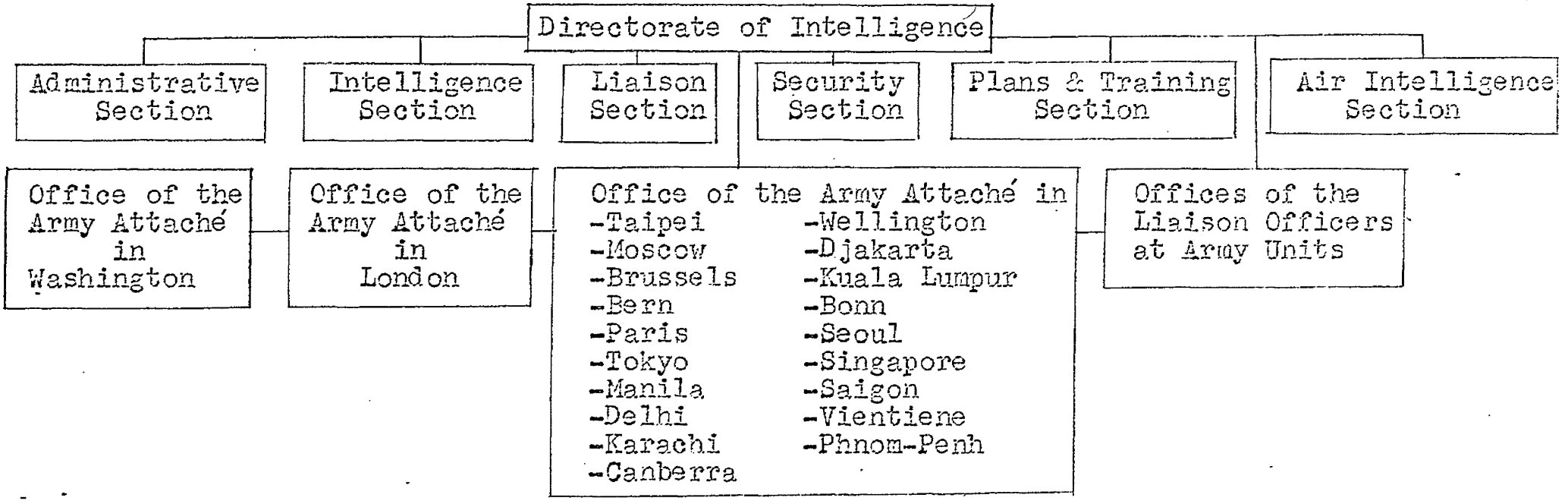


Source: Government of Thailand, Ministry of Defence, Army Day: 1955, Bangkok, 1955, in David A. Wilson, Politics in Thailand, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1962, p. 189.

Appendix 6

Organisation Chart of the Directorate of Intelligence

The Royal Thai Army



Source: Government of Thailand, Department of the Army, Organisations of the Directorate of Intelligence, Mimeograph, Bangkok, p. 5, translated by the writer.

Appendix 7

Shares in Private Companies Held By The Ministry of Defence and the War Veterans Organisation

Agency & Enterprises	Nature of Business	Share Held Over 50%
Ministry of Defence		
Fang Oil Refinery	Oil Refining	X
Bangkok Refinery	Oil Refining	X
Weaving Organisation	Textile Spinning	X
Fuel Organisation	Government and retail filling stations	X
Tanning Organisation	Manufacturing of shoes, leather, etc.	X
Glass Organisation	Bottle manufacturing, asbestos dealers	X
Battery Organisation	Battery manufactury	X
Preserved Food Organisation	Processing preserved food	X
Bangkok Dock Company	Ship repair	X
War Veterans Organisation		
Wood Industry Co.	Logging, charcoal, construction	X
Engineering Co.	Construction Contracting	87
Sena Press Co.	Printing	X
Paper Clip and Pin Factory	Manufacturing of clips, pins	X
Thai Jute Mill Co.	Gunny bags manufacturing	X

Source: Robert J. Muscat, Development Strategy in Thailand, Frederick A. Praeger, New York & London, 1966, p. 296.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and Periodicals

Apter, David. The Politics of Modernisation. University of Chicago Press. Chicago and London, 1967.

Badgley, John H. "Two Styles of Military Rule: Thailand and Burma," Government and Opposition, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1959.

Blanchard, Wendell, ed. Thailand: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture. HRAF Press. New Haven, 1958.

Chaiyanam, Direk. Thai kab songkhramlok khrang thi sorng (Thailand and World War II). Phrae Phitaya Press. Bangkok, 1967.

Chakrabongse, Chula. Lords of Life. Alvin Redman Ltd., London, 1960.

Channuwong, Jakrawan. Jormphon thanorm kittikhajorn phonek praphat jarusathian lae warasutthai khorng jormphon por phibunsongkhram (Field Marshal Thanom Kittikhajorn, General Praphat Jarusathian and the Downfall of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram). Maeban Karnruan Press. Bangkok, 1964.

Chulalongkorn, King. Phra ratchadamrat songthalaeng phraborrommarachathibai kaekhai kanpokkhrong phaendin (Speech on the Change in Government Administration). Krom Samphasamit Press. Bangkok, 1967.

Coast, John. Some Aspects of Siamese Politics. Institute of Pacific Relations. New York, 1953.

Crosby, Sir Josiah. Siam: The Crossroads. Hollis and Carter Ltd. London, 1845.

Darling, Frank C. Thailand and the United States. Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1965.

Eisenhower, Dwight D. Mandate for Change 1953-1956. Heinemann. London, 1963.

Embree, John F. "Thailand: A Loosely Structured Social System", American Anthropologist, LII. 1950.

Evers, H.D. The Formation of Social class structure: Urbanization, Bureaucratization and Social Mobility in Thailand. Monash University, Melbourne, 1965.

Fifield, Russel H. The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia. Harper and Brothers. New York, 1958.

Foreign Office and Ministry of Economic Warfare. Siam Basic Handbook London, 1945.

Fried, Robert C. Comparative Political Institution. The Macmillan Co. New York, 1966.

Fulbright, Senator J.W. "Speech in the Senate," The Social Science Review, Vol. 4, No. 3, December, 1965.

Graham, W.A. Siam, Vol. II. Alexander Moring Ltd. London, 1924.

Halpern, A. ed. Policies Towards China. McGraw-Hill. New York, 1965.

Haring, John and Westphal, Larry. "Financial Policy in Postwar Thailand", Asian Survey, Vol. 8, No. 5, 1968.

Hatsabamroe, Chot and Samakkhitham, Pricha. 35 pi haeng yuk prachathipatai. (Thirty-Five Years of Democratic Era). Mitjaroen Press. Bangkok, 1968.

Hoontrakool, Akorn. "Democracy - A Luxurious Commodity", Samaggi Sara, Vol. 39, London, August 1968.

Horowitz, Irving Louis. Three Worlds of Development: The Theory and Practice of International Stratification. Oxford University Press. New York, 1966.

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. A Public Development for Thailand. The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1963.

Insor, D. Thailand: A Political, Social and Economic Analysis. Allen and Unwin. London, 1963.

Jaroenrat, Sanit. O wa ana pracharat (The People Grief). Phrae Phitaya Press. Bangkok, 1964.

Johnson, John J. The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis. University of Chicago Press. Chicago and London, 1964.

----ed. The role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries. Princeton University Press. Princeton, New Jersey, 1962.

----The Military and Society in Latin America. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1963.

Jones, Shepard and Myers, Denys. Documents on American Foreign Relations. Vol. III, July 1940-June 1941. World Peace Foundation. Boston, 1941.

Kahin, George McT. Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia. Fornell University Press. Ithaca, New York, 1959.

Khathadam. Susan nakkanmuang (Politician's Graveyard). Phanfa Phitaya Press. Bangkok, 1963.

Khemayothin, Net. Chiwit naiphon (Life of a General). Social Science Association of Thailand Press. Bangkok, 1966.

----Ngan taidin khorng phanek yothi (The Underground Work of Colonel Yothi). Bangkok, 1957.

Khonpricha, S. Chunum pathakatha khorng bukkhon samkhan (Collected Lectures of Prominent Persons). Suwan Banphot Press. Bangkok, 1961.

Kiat. Phongsawadan kanmuang (Political Chronicles). Kiattisak Press. Bangkok, 1950.

Korani, Withet. Chiwit lae kantorsu khorng hasib ratthamontri (Lives of Fifty Ministers). P.A.N. Press, Bangkok, 1963.

Kruger, Royne. The Devil's Discus. Cassell and Co., London, 1964.

Kuwanon, Jarun. Chiwit kanturso khorng jormphon por phibunsongkhram (The Life of Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram). Aksorn Jaroenthat Press. Bangkok, 1953.

----Chiwit kantorsu khorng bukkhon samkhan (Lives of Prominent Persons). Niphon Press. Bangkok, 1953.

Landon, Kenneth. Siam in Transition. University of Chicago Press. Chicago, 1939.

Lasswell, Harold D. Politics: Who Gets What, When, How, World Publishing Co. New York, 1961.

Leach, Edmund. "The First of the Reith Lectures", The Listener, Vol. 78, No. 2016, 16 November, 1967.

Leonowens, Anna. The English Governess at the Siamese Court. Arthur Barker Ltd. London, 1870.

Macdonald, Alexander. Bangkok Editor. The Macmillan Co. New York, 1950.

Meksawan, Arsa. The Role of the Provincial Governor. Institute of Public Administration. Thammasat University. Bangkok, 1962.

Modelski, George. SEATO: Six Studies. Australian National University Press. Melbourne, 1962.

Muktharakosa, Thawi. Phra maha thiraratjao (King Vajiravudh). Phrae Phitaya Press. Bangkok, 1963.

Muscat, Robert. Development Strategy in Thailand. Frederick A. Praeger. New York and London, 1966.

Mydral, Gunnar. Asian Drama: An Enquiry into the Poverty of Nations. Penguin Books. London, 1968.

"913". Jormphon thanorm nayok khon sue (Field Marshal Thanom). Odeon Store Press. Bangkok, 1964.

Nuechterlein, Donald. "Thailand After Sarit", Asian Survey Vol. 4, No. 5, May, 1964.

-----"Thailand and SEATO: A Ten-Year Appraisal", Asian Survey, Vol. 4, No. 12, December 1964.

----Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia. Cornell University Press. Ithaca, New York, 1965.

-----"Thailand: The Years of Danger and of Hope," Asian Survey, Vol. 6, No. 2, February, 1966.

Phillips, Herbert. Thai Peasant Personality: The Patterning of Interpersonal Behaviour in the Village of Bangchan. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965.

Pla Thong. Phak kanmuang thai (Thai Political Parties). Kawna Press. Bangkok, 19651

Pombhejara, Vichitvong. "The Second Phase of Thailand's Six-Year Economic Development Plan 1964-1966." Asian Survey, Vol. 5, No. 3, March 1965.

Pramoj, Seni. Chumnum niphon seni (Collected Works). Ruam San Press. Bangkok, 1966.

-----Seni niphon (M.R. Seni Pramoj's Writings). Ruam San Press. Bangkok, 1966.

----Prachum pathakatha lae kham aphiprai (Speeches and Lectures). Ruam San Press. Bangkok, 1967.

Prasangsit, W. Ch. Phaendin somdet phra pokklao (The Reign of King Prachathipok). Phradung Chat Press. Bangkok, 1962.

Premjit, Siri. Prawatsat thai nai raborp prachathipatai samsib pi (The History of Thailand During 30 Years of Democracy). Kasem Banakit Press. Bangkok, 1962.

Pricha, Phra Wichian. Phongsawadan nua (Annals of the North). Khuru Sapha Press. Bangkok, 1959.

Rachanuphap, Damrong. Prachum phongsawadan phak thi sam tamnan kanken-thahan (Collection of Chronicles Part 23: History of Military Conscription). Thaphrajan Press, Bangkok, 1966.

-----Tamnan kromthahanrab thi ha (Chronicle of the Fifth Infantry Regiment). Thaphrajan Press, Bangkok, 1966.

Rekharuji, Salao and Pramuan Withaya, Udom. Piyamaharat julalongkorn (Chulalongkorn the Beloved). Odeon Store Press. Bangkok, 1961.

Riggs, Fred. W. Thailand: the Modernisation of a Bureaucratic Polity. East-West Centre Press. Honolulu, 1966.

Rose, Saul ed. Politics in Southern Asia. London and New York, 1963.

Saowarak, Tua tai tae chue yang (Fame Beyond Death). Kuakan Press. Bangkok, 1965.

Silcock, T.H. ed. Thailand: Social and Economic Studies in Development. Australian National University Press. Canberra, 1967.

Singh, L.P. "Thai Foreign Policy", Asian Survey, Vol. 3, No. 11, November, 1963.

Sirisamphand, Kasem and Snidvongs, Neon. "Naew damri thang kanmuang nai phrabatsomdet phra julajormklao jaoyuhua" (Political Thoughts of King Chulongkorn). Social Science Review, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1967.

Sithi-Amnuai, Paul. "Thailand - Will Democracy Work?" Wall Street, New York, 1967. Mimeograph.

Skinner, William. Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History Cornell University Press. Ithaca, New York, 1957.

-----Leadership and Power in the Chinese Community of Thailand. Cornell University Press. Ithaca, New York, 1958.

Supphawit and Chuachawalit, Not. Muangthai nai rabob rathasapha. (Thailand in the Parliamentary System). Borphit Press. Bangkok, 1967.

Sutton, Joseph ed. Problems of Politics and Administration in Thailand. Department of Government. Indiana University. 1962.

Thailand, Government of. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "An interview Given to the United States National Editorial Study Mission to Asia." Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 1, August-September, 1961.

-----"The Prime Minister's Address on the Fifth Anniversary of the Revolution". Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 2, October-November, 1963.

----"The Prime Minister's Statement of Government Policy Delivered to the Constituent Assembly on 19 September, 1963." Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 3, December 1963-January 1964.

----"The Prime Minister's Address on the Third Anniversary of the Revolution". Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 2, October-November 1964.

----"The Prime Minister's Address on the Third Anniversary of the Cabinet." Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 4, February-March, 1962.

----"The Policy of Self-Reliance and Mutual Co-operation". Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 3, December 1961-January 1962.

---"The Prime Minister's Address on the Fifth Anniversary of the Revolution". Foreign Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 2, October-November, 1963.

Thai Noi. 11 Nayokratthamontri thai (Thailand's Eleven Premiers). Kawna Press. Bangkok, 1967.

----Kor narork klang thale chalam (The Devil's Island). Phrae Phitaya Press. Bangkok, 1963.

----Luektang kueng phutthakan (Elections in the Year B.E. 2500.) Prasertsin Press. Bangkok, 1957.

----Nayokratthamontri khon thi sibet kab sam phunam patiwat (The Eleventh Premier and Three Leaders of the Coup d'Etat). Phrae Phitaya Press. Bangkok, 1964.

----Prasopkan 34 pi haeng rabob prachathipatai (Thirty-Four Years of Democracy). Phrae Phitaya Press. Bangkok, 1966.

----Prawat bukkhon samkhan (Personalities). 2 Volumes. Odeon Store Press. Bangkok, 1961.

Thompson, Virginia. Thailand: The New Siam. The Macmillan Co. New York, 1941.

Thompson, Virginia and Adloff, Richard. The Left Wing in Southeast Asia. Institute of Pacific Relations. New York, 1950.

Tinker, Hugh. Reorientations: Studies on Asia in Transition. Pall Mall Press. London, 1965.

Tondel, Lyman, Jr., ed. The Southeast Asia Crisis: Background Papers and Proceedings of the Eighth Hammarskjold Forum. The Association of the Bar of the City of New York. New York, 1966.

Toye, Hugh. Laos: Buffer State or Battleground. Oxford University Press. London, 1968.

Vandenbosch, Amry and Butwell, Richard. The Changing Face of Southeast Asia. University of Kentucky Press. Lexington, 1966.

Vella, Walter F. The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955.

Wales, Quaritch H.G. Ancient Siamese Government and Administration. Bernard Quaritch. London, 1934.

Wilson, David A. Political Tradition and Political Change in Thailand. The RAND Corp. Santa Monica, California, June, 1962.

----Politics in Thailand. Cornell University Press. Ithaca, New York, 1962.

----"Thailand and Marxism," in Frank N. Trager, ed. Marxism in Southeast Asia: A Study of Four Countries. Stanford University Press. Stanford, California, 1960.

----"Thailand: Old Leaders and New Directions". Asian Survey. Vol. 3, No. 2, February 1963.

----"Thailand: Scandal and Progress," Asian Survey. Vol. 5, No. 2, February 1965.

----"The Military in Thai Politics", in John J. Johnson, ed. The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries. Princeton University Press. Princeton, New Jersey, 1962.

-----"Bangkok's Dim View to the East." Asian Survey. Vol. 1, No. 4, June 1961.

Wiphatthawat, Chit. Phao saraphap (Phao Confesses). Phrae Phitaya Press. Bangkok, 1960.

Wood, W.A.R. A History of Siam. T. Fisher Unwin. London, 1926.

de Young, John E. Village Life in Modern Thailand. University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955.

Documents

The Constitution for the Governance of the Realm B.E. 2502 (1959).

Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2475 (1932).

Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2511 (1968).

Government of Thailand. The Council of Minister. Political Party Act, B.E. 2498 (1955). Bangkok, 1955.

Government of Thailand, Department of the Army. Kansueksa sammana kamlangphon chan sung (Seminar on High-Level Manpower). Bangkok, 1963.

----Banchi nuai thahan khorng thorbor (Organisations of the Army). Bangkok, 1965.

----Kan jad nuai nai songkhram indojin lae mahaasiaburapha 2483-2488 (Combat Organisation During the Indo-Chinese Conflict and the Great War in Asia 1940-1945). Bangkok, 1967.

----Khambanyai rueng nathi kanjad lae saingan khorng korkor borkor thahan sungsud thorbor thorror lae thoror (Lecture on Duties, Organisations, Chains of Command of the Ministry of Defence, the Supreme Command Headquarters, the Army, Navy, and Air Force). Bangkok.

----Ekkasan kiawkab prachakorn (Documents Concerning the Population), Bangkok, 1963.

----Luksut rongrian nairoi phrajulajormklao pi nueng thueng ha (The Curriculum of the Military Academy). Bangkok, 1968.

----Luksut witthayalai porngkan ratchaanajak (Prospectus of the National Defence College). Bangkok, 1968.

----Nayobai kanjadha lae banju kamlangphon pi 2509-2514 (Procurement of Manpower Policy: 1963-1971). Bangkok, 1963.

----Phaen kansueksa baeb mai (Notes on New Educational System). Bangkok, 8 June, 1965.

----Prakat korngthabbok rueng kanrabsamak bukkhon khaw pen nakrian rongrian senathikan thahanbok (Announcement Concerning Candidates for the Command and General Staff College). Bangkok, 1967.

Government of Thailand, Department of Public Relations. Kham prasai Khorng nayokrattamontri nai kan poet anusawari prachathipatai (The Prime Minister's Speech on National Day 1940). Bangkok, June 1940.

Government of Thailand, The National Defence College. Rainam naksueksa witthayalai porngkan ratchaanajak tangtae chut nueng thueng chut thi paet (Prospectus and Names of Students of the National Defence College). Printing Press of the Department of Military Survey. Bangkok, 1965.

Government of Thailand, National Economic Development Board. Phaen phatthana setthakit lae sangkhom haeng chat chabab thi sorng phorsor 2510-2514 (The National Economic and Social Development Plan 1967-1971). Office of the Prime Minister, Bangkok, 1968.

Government of Thailand, Office of the Prime Minister. Thailand Official Yearbook: 1964. Government House Printing Office. Bangkok, 1964.

Government of Thailand. Ratthasapha san (Parliamentary Gazette). Volume 2, No. 37, 7 September, 1854.

-----Prakat phra barommaratchaongkan tang phuraksa phranakhorn fai thanan (Royal Proclamation Appointing the Military Caretaker of the Kingdom). Bangkok, 1957.

Government of Thailand, Royal Thai Air Force. Prakat korngthap akat chabab thi paet (Announcement No. 8). Bangkok, 29 June, 1948.

Khana Ku Chat (The Patriots). Prakat khana ku chat chabab thi sibkao (Announcement No. 19). Bangkok, 29 June, 1951.

Kittikhajorn, Field Marshal Thanom. Owat nai phithi tham sat patiyan ton tor thongchai chaloemphon (Speech on the Pledging of Oath to the Colours). 8 November, 1963.

The Lawyers Association of Thailand. Ratthathammanun chabab pathommaroek jon thueng rang patjuban (Collected Constitutions from the First Constitution to the Present Draft). Ruammit Thai Press. Bangkok, 1965.

Phibunsongkhram, Field Marshal P. Letter to the Editors. September 1947. Mimeograph.

Prachathipok, King. Phra ratchahatlekha song sala ratchasombat (Letter Announcing Royal Abdication). March 1934.

The Revolutionary Party. Prakat khana patiwat (Announcements of the Revolutionary Party). 20 October, 1958.

Royal Thai Government Gazette 1948-1949. "Act to Indemnify Promoters of the Coup d'Etat B.E. 2490". Bangkok. 1950

The Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty and the Pacific Charter.

Thanarat, Field Marshal Sarit. Letter to Members of the Chat Sangkhom (National Socialist) Party. February 1958.

Thalaengkan ratthaban (Government Announcement). Department of Public Relations. Bangkok, 1941.

Newspapers and Magazines

The Bangkok Post
Bangkok World
The Chicago Daily News
The Christian Science Monitor
The Daily Mail
The Daily Telegraph
The Glasgow Herald
The Hindu
The Manchester Guardian
New China News Agency
The New York Herald Tribune
The New York Times
The News Chronicle
North China Daily News
Prachathipatai
The Scotsman
Siam Nikorn
Siam Rat
South China Morning Post
The Statesman
The Straits Times
The Sunday Times
Time Magazine
The Times

Kamol Somvichian

Born 14 March, 1936, Bangkok

- B.A., Chulalongkorn University, 1957
- Smith-Mundt Fulbright Scholarship, 1959-1962
- M.A., New York University, 1961
- Instructor, United States Army Language School, 1961-1962
- Lecturer in Politics, Chulalongkorn University 1962-present
- Rockefeller Scholarship, 1966-1969